

ARMED FORCES OF THE INDIAN UNION

HISTORY OF OPERATIONS IN JAMMU & KASHMIR (1947–48)

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TO ALL WHO SERVED

PREFACE

This is the full story of the military operations in Jammu & Kashmir during 1947–48, undertaken to save that Princely State, which had acceded to the Union of India, from a brutal invasion from Pakistan

The history is divided into three parts—Parts I & III written by me and Part II by Dr Dharm Pal, my colleague in the Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Government of India The work was later edited and revised by me as Director, Historical Section. The history was completed by 1969 before I left the Historical Section, but its publication was then deferred, and finally approved only recently. The draft has been again revised and updated to incorporate the additional information that has become available from books published in the last two decades But the maps, drawn in the early sixties, have had to be retained and, therefore, the heights of hills and some other details appear in feet instead of metres The grid references of tactical positions and hill features and the precise references to the original source material are not given, but it is hoped that this would not greatly inconvenience the general reader As contemporary photographs of the senior commanders are not available, their photographs included in this book show them in the higher ranks they reached later.

No pains have been spared to make this history as accurate and authentic as possible. The Government records, mostly available in the Historical Section, were carefully studied Relevant chapters were examined by, and discussed with, almost all the senior officers who had taken part in these operations. These officers included FM Cariappa, Gen Shrinagesh, Gen Thimayya, Lt-Gen Kalwant Singh, Lt-Gen L P Sen, Lt-Gen Harbakhsh Singh, Lt-Gen Satarawala and Maj-Gen Paranjape, and also Shri H.M Patel, the then Defence Secretary Their comments, and the suggestions of Ministry of External Affairs, Army HQ and Air HQ, proved most enlightening Moreover, the two authors visited many of the battlefields and operational areas to examine the terrain and to talk to the locals with personal knowledge of incidents. We went to the extent of following some of the routes, over very difficult terrain, taken by the troops to outflank certain enemy strongholds.

I am grateful not only to Dr Dharm Pal but to many other colleagues for their contribution to the completion of this history. Dr B C Chakravorty, the then Narrator in the Historical Section, contributed immensely by securing all the clearances required and by checking or revising many parts of the book The maps were drawn with devoted care by Shri T.D. Sharma, Cartographer, and Shri Karora Singh, Draughtsman, and have now been retraced by D'man Shri Ramesh Chander. The photographs were mostly supplied by the Public Relations Directorate of the Ministry of Defence, to which we are highly obliged Shri R S Thapar, Dr. J Sundaram, Dr S S. Bhat-

tacharya, Dr D C Verma, and Shri Jasvinder Singh have helped in re-checking references, preparing the bibliography and the index, compiling the list of gallantry award winners, and seeing the book through the press. Brig K M Bhimaya and Air Cmde P.E. Gaynor have given me valuable assistance, not only in securing clearances from their respective Headquarters but also in 'minor Staff Duties' matters Smt Shaira Begum, Sh N M Soni, Sh R K. Naidu and Km Vijay Dhiman deserve all praise for their secretarial assistance The work would not have been possible, of course, without the support and guidance of the Ministry of Defence

Although the history has been checked by so many persons and organisations, I accept responsibility for the facts stated and the views expressed, which do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the vettors, and in no way commit the Government of India

New Delhi
Dated: February 26, 1987

(S N. PRASAD)
Chief Editor

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	Air Control Team
Adv	Advance
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
Amb	Ambulance
Amn	Ammunition
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
Armd	Armoured
ASC	Army Service Corps
Atk	Anti Tank
AWD	Advanced Workshop Detachment
Bde Hq	Brigade Headquarters
BIO	Brigade Intelligence Officer
Brig	Brigadier
Bty	Battery
cm	Centimetre
Cmde	Commodore
Col	Colonel
Coy Hq	Company Headquarters
DEP	Delhi and East Punjab
Det	Detachment
Div	Division
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO	Director of Military Operations
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DZ	Dropping Zone
EME	Electrical & Mechanical Engineers
Engrs	Engineers
Fd	Field
FPO	Field Post Office
FST	Field Surgical Team
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HQ	Headquarters
hy	Heavy
IAF	Indian Air Force
Indep Armd Sqn	Independent Armoured Squadron
Inf	Infantry
JCO	Junior Commissioned Officer
KI	Kashmir Infantry
km	Kilometre
LAD	Light Aid Detachment
Lt/Lieut	Lieutenant
Lt-Col	Lieutenant Colonel
Lt-Gen	Lieutenant General

LMG	Light Machine Gun
L of C	Line or Lines of Communication
Maint	Maintenance
Maj-Gen	Major General
MG	Machine Gun
MH	Military Hospital
Mil	Military
mm	Millimetre
MMG	Medium Machine Gun
Mtn	Mountain
NCE	Non-combatant enrolled
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
OO	Operation Order
Op Inst	Operation Instruction
OR	Other Ranks
Ord	Ordnance
pl	Platoon
Pt	Point
Regt	Regiment/Regimental
RIA	Royal Indian Artillery
RIAF	Royal Indian Air Force
RIASC	Royal Indian Army Service Corps
RIE	Royal Indian Engineers
Sig	Signal
Sqn	Squadron
SU	Surgical Unit
Tac	Tactical
Tp	Troop
UN	United Nations
WD	War Diary
Wksp	Workshop

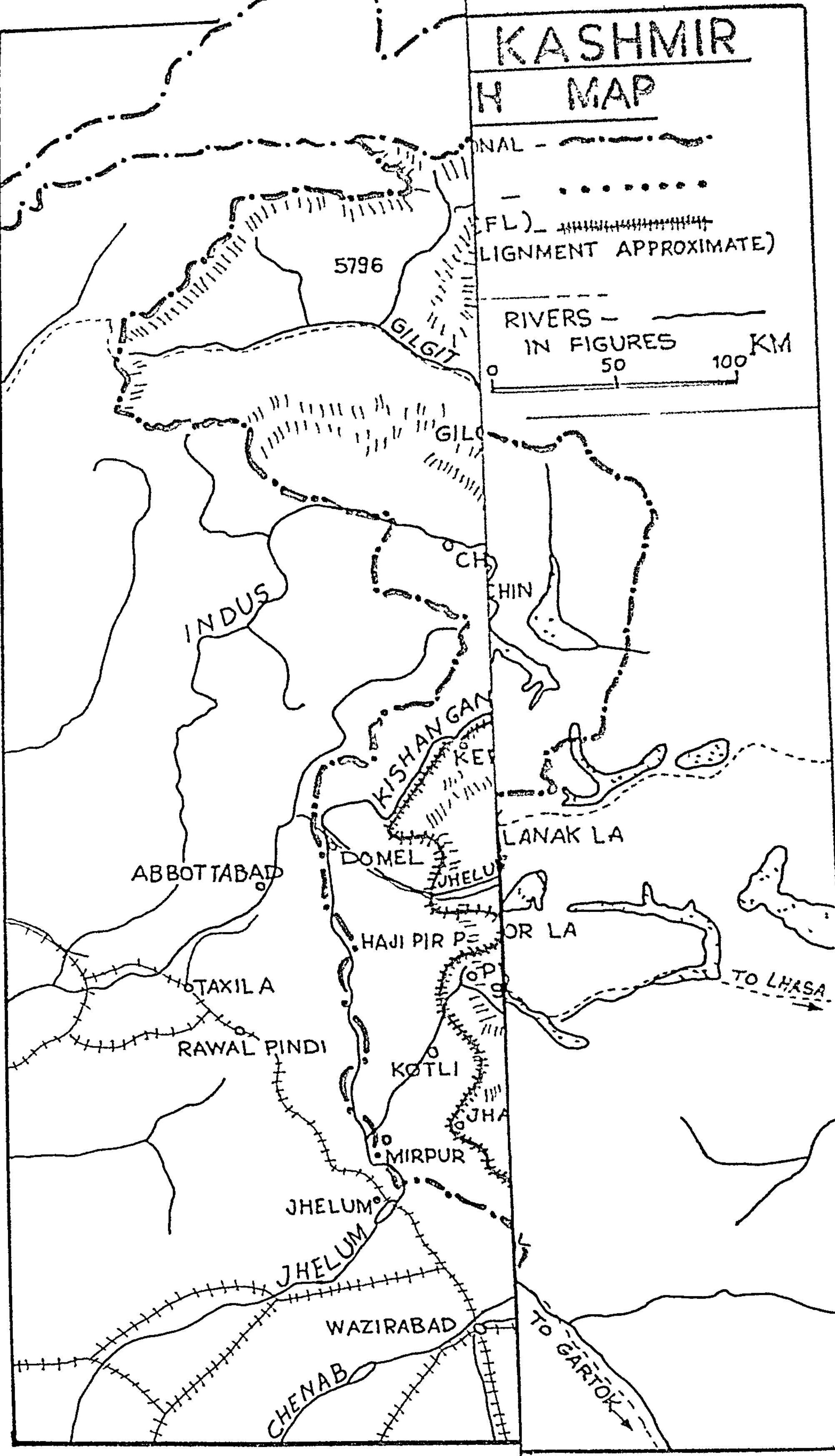
MAPS

Facing Page

ILLUSTRATIONS

PART-I

INVASION REPELLED



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WAZIRABAD
To GARTOK
CHENAB



Maj Somnath Sharma, PVC (Posthumous), the first winner of the highest gallantry award

The Raiders Gift Pillaged building in Uri Oct' 47

The First Fly-in Indian troops landing on Srinagar airfield

CHAPTER I

The State of Jammu and Kashmir

BOUNDARIES

On the map of India, the State of Jammu and Kashmir appeared as a somewhat rectangular projection in the extreme north-west corner of the sub-continent In size it was the largest of the Indian 'Princely States' during the pre-independence era Its area was 222,870 sq km, or roughly double the area of Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg combined In terms of Latitude and Longitude, the State lay between 32°17′ and 36°58′N and 73°26′ and 80°30′ E But in this vast area of land there were only 39 towns and 8903 villages Out of a total population of about four million in 1947, the urban population was estimated at 362,314 and the rural at 3,503,929 The State was very sparsely populated, with an average of only 17 souls per square km, including the comparatively dense population in the Kashmir Valley itself[1]

Apart from its size, the State was important because of its strategic location Even before the birth of Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir was surrounded on almost three sides by foreign states Today, its importance has been accentuated by recent international developments To the east of the State lay Tibet, to its north lay Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang (Xinjiang); to the west lay Afghanistan, to the south-west and south was Pakistan, and to the south and south-east lay the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh of India

Not only the State's topography, but also its climate, economy, social organisation and cultural heritage were determined by the mountains They had also outlined the administrative divisions of the State from early times

MOUNTAIN RANGES

From the western border of Spiti (about 78°E of Greenwich) the Great Himalayan Range threw off an important spur to the south—the Pir Panjal Range This ran for about 480 km to the west roughly parallel to the parent range, up to Baramula and Uri, and the gorge of the Jhelum Only the Chenab cut through this range near Kishtwar The eastern half of the Pir Panjal Range divided the drainage of the Chenab from those of the Beas and the Ravi Administratively it divided Lahul from Kulu, and further west, Kishtwar and Padar from Chamba Continuing across the Chenab, it formed the southern wall of the Kashmir Valley, separating it from Jammu and the outer hills containing Akhnur, Kotli, Mirpur, Bhimbar, Naushahra, Rajauri and Punch The height of the range was about 4572 metres and passes were few One

was the Rohtang Pass (3978 metres) joining Kulu to Lahul, another, the Banihal (about 2743 metres) carrying the motor road from Jammu to Srinagar, the Pir Panjal Pass (3494 metres) from Rajauri into the Valley, and the Nilkanta Pass (3636 metres) from Punch to Gulmarg

After throwing off the Pir Panjal Range to the left, the main Himalayan Range continued in a north-westerly direction, acting as the watershed between the catchment areas of the Chenab and the Jhelum on one side and the Indus on the other The eastern portion separated Lahul from Rupshu in south-east Ladakh; further west the range separated Kishtwar and Kashmir Valley from the Ladakh highlands and Baltistan The main passes from east to west were the Baralacha Pass (4890 metres) on the Kulu to Leh route, the Umasi La (5294 metres) leading from Kishtwar to the Zaskar valley, the Chillung La (4401 metres) which led to a mere desolate waste of snow and rock forming the watershed between the headwaters of the Zaskar and the Suru rivers of Ladakh; the Zoji La (3529 metres) on the great caravan route between Srinagar and Leh, and the Kamri Pass and the Burzil Pass (4198 metres) leading from Srinagar to Gilgit The mighty range ended with the terrible massif of the Nanga Parbat (8126 metres) but a Himalayan spur continued some distance west-south-west till it reached the right bank of the Jhelum near Muzaffarabad There it faced the Pir Panjal Range across the deep gorge of the Jhelum

From the main range, two other branches broke off near the Zoji La One ran due south, separating the drainage of the Chenab from that of the Jhelum and forming the eastern wall of the Kashmir Valley On nearing the Chenab near Kishtwar, this range veered round to the west and joined up with the Pir Panjal Range near Banihal Pass. This range attained a height of about 4572 metres and was crossed only by a few difficult passes over 3353 metres in altitude that gave a precarious access from the Valley to Kishtwar. The Kolahoi (5425 metres) and Mahadeo (3966 metres) peaks, so prominently seen from the Valley, were located on a minor spur running due west from the root of the major southern spur, near Amarnath Cave. This minor spur formed the southern wall of the famous Sind valley

The second major spur from Zoji La ran west, separating the valley of the Kishanganga river from the main Kashmir Valley It was crossed by the main Srinagar-Gilgit route over a high pass, 3638 metres high, called Rajdiangan Pass, and then continued along the left bank of the Kishanganga, finally turning south and reaching the Jhelum near Uri The southern extension of the range was known as the Kazinag mountains, home of the big Markhor goat. This range thus formed the western wall of the Kashmir Valley

Beyond the Great Himalayan Range lay Ladakh and Baltistan Ladakh had more mountain ranges Parallel to the Himalayan Range and just north of it ran the Zaskar Range Its average height was about 6096 metres but from the north it looked far lower due to the great

height—about 3810 metres—of the plateau itself The desolate region between the Zaskar and the Himalayan ranges was drained by numerous small snow-fed streams which joined up to form the Zaskar river This river pierced through the Zaskar Range and joined the Indus a few km west of Leh This region was an endless waste of rock and snow, inhabited only by wandering herdsmen and their flocks, across which ran the long route from Kulu and Simla to Leh, crossing the Zaskar Range by difficult passes over 4877 metres in altitude In the west the Zaskar Range joined up with the main Himalayan Range near Zoji La, and was bounded further by the Suru river. The Indus ran parallel to the Zaskar Range along a narrow valley, and Leh, Kargil and Skardu were situated in little side-valleys of the Indus tributaries Leh, the capital of Ladakh, was a focal point for the caravan routes to Yarkand and Lhasa, to Simla, Srinagar and Gilgit. To the north of the Indus valley ran the Ladakh Range separating it from the Shyok valley, till the Shyok fell into the Indus a few km above Skardu through a gap between the Ladakh Range and the Haramosh Range of the mighty Karakoram North of the Shyok and the Indus lay mountains even mightier than those to the south These mountains, the heart of the Karakoram Range, were a broad belt of dizzy heights, gigantic glaciers and utter desolation pierced only by occasional parties of explorers and mountaineers They included K2 (8610 metres), the second highest peak in the world, and a host of other giants over 7620 metres in height Between them flowed immense glaciers like the Baltoro and the Siachen, perhaps larger than any seen beyond the Poles The Biafo and Hispar glaciers, for example, presented an unbroken stretch of ice over 80 km long. But from either side of this mountain mass ran caravan routes, one from Leh to Yarkand over the Karakoram Pass of 5575 metres and the other from Gilgit to Kashgar via the Mintaka Pass (4709 metres)

These mountain ranges divided the State into three clear-cut geographical regions These three divisions were, Jammu and the outer hills, the Kashmir Valley; and the high mountainous region of the north So tremendous were these mountain barriers that these regions showed a wide range of diversity in their climate, flora and fauna, economy and social organisation, language and culture In fact it would not be too much to say that these different parts of the State had little in common, and only an accident of history had brought them under a single state

JAMMU AND THE OUTER HILLS

This was the region lying between the Punjab border and the Pir Panjal Range The State's boundary did not begin with the hills, but embraced a tract of the Punjab plains about 8 to 24 km wide This plain was generally arid and stony, cut up by numerous dry river-beds and ravines coming from the hills. But there were also many fertile tracts in it, and it was fairly thickly populated Its elevation was approximately

through which the Jhelum passed, was the largest; the Dal, adjoining Srinagar, the most famous, and the Manasbal perhaps the one most entrancingly beautiful. The Valley was well-watered with innumerable snow-fed streams and springs The major streams like the Kishanganga, the Sind and the Liddar were rivers in their own right, flowing through lovely side-valleys before their waters fell into the Jhelum The soil was extremely fertile, and green fields covered the entire level stretch The main crops of the Valley were rice of a fine variety, and saffron Among the fruits, apples, apricots and peaches were common while walnut, willow, chinar, and plane-trees added variety to the landscape Maize and millet were grown on the higher slopes above 2000 metres while the hill sides were ablaze with wild indigo Timber was one of the chief products of the State, and forests were boundless Enjoying a temperate climate, the forests were mainly of fir and pine, deodar and willows, and, on the higher hills near the timber line, maples, horse-chestnuts and birch trees predominated Due to the severe sun and the hot winds of the Punjab plains, these forests were generally confined to the shady northern slopes of the hills, the opposite slopes being frequently covered with grass and shrubs only High up on the mountain slopes, maize and millet gave place to the hardy buckwheat and Tibetan barley. Then fields and forests were left behind and the shoulders of the mountains were covered with grass and glaciers and bare rocks, from which the glistening white domes of the mighty peaks towered into the blue sky.

The Kashmir Valley had been a watchword for beauty throughout the ages Emperor Jehangir, a good judge of beauty, considered it 'heaven on earth' The ethereal loveliness of its surroundings had soaked well into the men and women of Kashmir They were highly intelligent and industrious In religion the overwhelming majority of the Kashmiris were Mussalmans The Hindus were mostly of the Brahmin caste, and Kashmiri Brahmins had been famous as a highly intelligent and gifted community They were the only community of the State to go out in large numbers and earn their living in the far corners of India The rest of the people stayed at home, engaging in agriculture in the villages or working as small traders and skilled artisans at Srinagar

Srinagar, the summer capital of the State, had in 1941 a population of 207,787 Lying along both the banks of the Jhelum, it was a quaint old place of wooden houses and narrow alleys The two portions of the city were connected by means of seven bridges over the Jhelum, and there were more bridges and arches over the numerous canals and backwaters joining the Jhelum to the Dal Lake nearby The 'West-End' of Srinagar was modern and clean, with broad roads, well-kept lawns and stately buildings The Maharaja's palace, the old Residency building and Nedou's famous hotel were all situated in this area, as well as the fashionable shopping centre catering to the needs of the tourists The poor Kashmiris lived in squalid hovels in the heart of the old city, and

the exquisitely beautiful and colourful pieces of shawl were produced in dingy, damp and dark rooms by workers squatting on the floor There were no other cities in the Valley (except Srinagar), though towns like Baramula, Anantnag and Bandipur, and tourist resorts like Gulmarg and Pahalgam, were numerous

THE DESOLATE REGION OF THE NORTH

The northern region was divided from the rest of the State by the mighty wall of the Great Himalayan Range To its north lay the stupendous mass of the Karakoram and Kunlun ranges, to the west the Hindukush Range and Afghanistan, while to the east the elevated plateau continued into Tibet The entire area was drained by the Indus and its tributaries The 'grain' of the land ran north-west to south-east, which was the direction taken by the main mountain-chains and river valleys Natural access to this region was from the south-west corner, up the valley of the Indus, and then eastwards between the Himalayas and the Karakoram This route avoided the Himalayan barrier, skirting the Nanga Parbat at its end But for the eastern half of the region, and Leh, the provincial capital, the shortest and easiest route was over the Zoji La from Srinagar

The continuous thread joining this sprawling region was the Indus river It entered this territory from the east, ran throughout its length and made its exit from the south-west corner into North West Frontier Province. The river was for most of its course a raging torrent, boiling and leaping down a steep gradient The junction of the Indus and Gilgit rivers was 1310 metres above sea-level About 128 km upstream, where the Shyok joined it, the Indus was 2350 metres in altitude Opposite Leh, another 208 km upstream, the level of the river was 3230 metres, while near the Kashmir-Tibet boundary in the east the Indus ran at the unbelievable height of 4200 metres above the sea-level [4]

This vast difference in altitudes of the river had a direct bearing on the nature of the terrain The western portion was exceedingly broken and steep Near Chilas, for example, the lowest point (Indus river) was only 1015 metres in elevation, while the Nanga Parbat towered 8126 metres above it, an elevation range of over 7000 metres within 51 km as the crow flies It was a country, therefore, of precipitous slopes and razor-edged ridges, with the rivers flowing deep down in narrow valleys For much of its course below Leh the Indus ran through a narrow canyon between sheer walls of smooth granite, forcing the caravan route frequently to leave the river-bank and cross over the backs of the spurs of the elevated table-land In the eastern portion of the territory, however, the hills ran to a uniform height of about 6400 metres while the river valley was over 3960 metres high It was a land, therefore, of broad and shallow valleys, low (by Himalayan standard), rolling hills and level stretches of rocky plains Eastern Ladakh, as this district was called, was dotted about with numerous salt-water lakes of large size.

During summer they received the melting snows of the mountain ranges, but had no outlet for their water, which consequently turned brackish in taste and green in colour The district of the upper Changchenmo river and the plains of Lingzitang, in the north-east corner of Ladakh, had a minimum height of 4880 metres

The scenery and climate of Ladakh were entirely different from the Kashmir Valley Rain clouds were held up and forced back in the Kashmir Valley by the Himalayan wall, so that Ladakh got very scanty rainfall, about 15 cm in the west and only 5 cm in the east every year Vegetation of every kind was almost absent Cliffs of bare rocks and ice, endless slopes and plains of stony gravel and swift-flowing rivers at the bottom of the valleys made up the scenery There was not a speck of cloud to be seen in the deep-blue sky The air was dry and bracing, but the mid-day sun beat down fiercely through the rarefied atmosphere in summer. As night fell, the rocks rapidly lost heat, and nights were freezingly cold in these barren uplands The country had none of the soft and restful beauty of the Valley, beckoning the jaded traveller or the idle pleasure-seeker to linger in its gentle caresses Ladakh had a beauty of a different mettle The mountains were haughty and aloof, the icy wastes were cold and barren The awe-inspiring grandeur of the scenery terrified most men, for the utter insignificance, the soap-bubble quality, of their ambitions, efforts, hopes, and fears, was brought home to them in the presence of these silent eternal mountains Under the full moon at night the landscape became a fairy land of liquid light and sharp shadows The half-frozen lakes glistened like molten silver

The inhabitants of the eastern and western portions of this territory varied greatly from each other. The Gilgit area was inhabited by a predominantly Muslim population akin in habits, features and dress to the people of Afghanistan The Buddhists formed the majority of the population eastward of Kargil, and their 'prayer-wheels' and monasteries were frequently met with along the caravan routes. A precarious agriculture was carried on in the valleys, but the high uplands were only for the nomadic shepherds with their flocks of sheep and goats Population was exceedingly sparse in the eastern region due to the inhospitable and barren terrain

COMMUNICATIONS

Due to the extremely mountainous terrain, modern communications in Jammu and Kashmir were largely non-existent In 1947 there was not one fully-equipped airfield in the whole of the State, although emergency landing strips for light planes were there at Gilgit, Chilas, Srinagar and Jammu There were only a few km of railways within the State's boundaries, connecting Jammu to Sialkot in the Punjab.

One all-weather road led from Rawalpindi to Srinagar through the Jhelum gorge. It was the easiest route into the Valley, since it did not have to climb across any of the mountain ranges enclosing the Valley

This road entered the State's boundary at the Kohala bridge over the Jhelum, and, keeping to the left bank of the river throughout, ran for 205 km to Srinagar The road had a macadamised surface and carried most of the tourist traffic and trade of Kashmir From Kohala, it ran due north to Domel, where the Jhelum took a sharp turn, flowing generally in a westerly direction between Domel and the Wular Lake At Domel, another road running from Abbottabad to Muzaffarabad came up to the opposite bank of the river The main road led from Domel via Chakothi and Uri to Baramula The road rose gradually higher and higher, and there were a number of small bridges over the side-*Nalas* of the gorge After Baramula, the Valley opened out and a level stretch of road took the traveller to Srinagar

From Srinagar, a number of minor motor roads led to different parts of the Valley One such road led to Tangmarg on the slope of the Pir Panjal Range, the debussing point for the famous pleasure-resort of Gulmarg Another led to Bandipur on the shore of the Wular Lake A third branched off from the main Srinagar-Jammu road near Anantnag and went up the valley of the Liddar river to the camping grounds at Pahalgam

The second major road in the State joined Srinagar to Jammu, a distance of about 320 km This was a route far more difficult and picturesque than the Jhelum gorge route. After leaving Srinagar, the road ran straight and level for about 96 km, with splendid straight-limbed poplars on either side Then it snaked up laboriously over the Pir Panjal Range, till a tunnel at the Banihal Pass at about 2743 metres enabled it to cross over to the other side of the range From the Banihal Pass the road descended to the village of Ramban, crossed the Chenab by a narrow bridge and climbed again to Batote before descending gently to Jammu

Apart from these all-weather motor roads, there were a number of fair-weather roads and jeep-tracks The most important of these led from Jammu north-westwards towards Punch Akhnur on the bank of the Chenab was the first town to be reached, and then the road carried on to Naushahra, Jhangar, Kotli and Punch, though at places it was barely jeepable Punch was connected to Uri on the Rawalpindi-Srinagar road by means of another road, motorable in fair weather, which led over the Haji Pir Pass of 2638 metres From Punch and Rajauri, rough tracks led northwards over the Pir Panjal Range and into the Kashmir Valley Other and better tracks led southwards to Mirpur and Kotli which were readily accessible from the Punjab plains

From Jammu a fair-weather road led eastwards also It passed through the large villages of Samba and Kathua, crossed the Ravi which had no bridge there and joined up with the Indian road-system at Pathankot From Jammu to Pathankot was a distance of 112 km This tenuous track was the only landlink between the State and India after the formation of Pakistan

Of the non-motorable tracks, the most important were the caravan route from Srinagar to Leh and the strategically vital track from Srinagar to Gilgit

The route from Srinagar to Leh was used by the Central Asian caravans trading between Srinagar and Yarkand in the Sinkiang (Xinjiang) province of China It was in essentially the same condition as it had been in the days of the Great Mughals No vehicular traffic was possible on it, and sure-footed ponies and 'yaks' were the only means of transport After leaving Srinagar, the route entered the lovely valley of the Sind river, climbed steeply up the saddle at the head of the valley, and crossed the Great Himalayan Range by the Zoji La at an altitude of 3528 metres Beyond the Zoji La the road sloped gently down, passed through Dras and reached Kargil, a Tehsil headquarter From Kargil it turned east, crossed the intervening ridges over the Fotu La of 4094 metres and reached the Indus river near Khalatse or Khalsi Thence it kept alongside the Indus, crossed it by a cantilever bridge and reached Leh in one of the side valleys The distance from Srinagar to Leh was 389 km.

From Leh, the caravan route continued north, crossed over the range into the valley of the Shyok river, went up this valley, and crossed the Karakoram Range by the Karakoram Pass of 5575 metres Beyond, the ground sloped down gently, and following the Yarkand stream, the weary traveller reached Yarkand town He had covered a distance of 771 km from Leh to Yarkand

The route from Srinagar to Gilgit was about 365 km long It was of great strategic importance Over it moved the troop reinforcements, reliefs and supplies for the Maharaja's garrisons in and around Gilgit, but it was in no better state than the Leh route From Srinagar to Bandipur was a level, motorable stretch Then began the climb over the watershed between the Jhelum and the Kishanganga The Rajdiangan or Rajdhani Pass at the top of the watershed was 3638 metres and commanded a superb view of the Nanga Parbat from close quarters The track then descended into the valley of the Kishanganga, went up it past the meadows of Gurais, and, crossing over to the right bank, ascended the steep slopes of the main Himalayan Range The track then bifurcated, one leading across the range by the Kamri Pass (4075 metres) and the other by the Burzil Pass (4198 metres) The two routes joined up again on the far side, and, descending down the gorge of the Astor river, crossed the stream by a bridge at Ranghat, which was only 1158 metres above sea-level Passing through Bunji and crossing the Indus by another frail bridge, the track went up the Gilgit river and reached Gilgit without encountering any further hurdles

Gilgit, apart from being the headquarters of a turbulent district, was connected to Kashgar in Sinkiang (Xinjiang) by yet another caravan route This route went up the gorge of the Hunza river and crossed the Karakoram by the Mintaka Pass of 4709 metres height

To complete the communications within the State of Jammu and Kashmir, a few more trunk-routes might be noted. As already mentioned, the easiest access from undivided India to the Ladakh plateau was along the valley of the Indus. Gilgit, therefore, was connected with Abbottabad and Murree in Pakistan by way of Chilas. From Gilgit, a rough track went up the Indus valley, running alongside the river, then veering off and climbing over the mountain spurs while the Indus ran between high walls of smooth granite, and again coming down alongside the river. The direction was generally eastwards and the route passed through Skardu before splitting up into two. The southern arm joined up with the Srinagar-Leh route near Kargil, northern arm went up the Shyok valley and linked up with the Leh-Yarkand route. Beyond Leh, similar and even more difficult tracks extended eastwards towards Gartok and Lhasa in Tibet. Another route ran southwards from Leh, going over the Zaskar Range, crossing a number of mountain passes over 4877 metres high including the Baralacha Pass, and finally debouching into the Kulu valley. Travel along this route was hardly different from pioneer exploration, for it was not in regular use even by the hardy caravans of Leh. It was excessively long and difficult, but it still provided a back-door access to Leh from India.

Unlike roads or railways, the State was fairly well-provided with telegraph and wireless facilities. A network of telegraph stations covered the State, penetrating even into the wild Shyok valley in order to send warning of floods. Most important villages and tourist resorts had telegraph offices. Wireless communications were mainly under the military authorities, but Gilgit and Naushahra had civil W/T stations. They served in some measure to compensate for the lack of modern means of transport. Most of the far-flung garrisons in the State could communicate with Srinagar by wireless telegraphy, which proved a crucial advantage when the tribal hordes poured into the State in October 1947.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP

The administration of J&K State, both civil and military, was headed by His Highness the Maharaja. He was the repository of all powers, and could lay down or amend the State's constitution by his own orders. He was the Head of the Government as well as C-in-C of the State army. The only check on his authority was the British Resident acting as the Crown Representative, and Paramountcy had in the 20th Century reached a stage where the British Resident could command or influence every action of the State Government in any field, if the Viceroy so desired. Appointment of the Prime Minister of the State required the approval of the Viceroy conveyed through the Resident.

The capital of the State was Srinagar in summer, and Jammu in winter. The State had four provinces, viz., Jammu, Srinagar, Gilgit and

Ladakh, each under a Governor Gilgit had been held on lease by the Government of India, and was handed back to the Maharaja only in August 1947 Under each Governor were a number of Wazir-i-Wazarats, who were in charge of districts Some of the districts, like Baramula, Anantnag, Mirpur and Rajauri, were average-sized but well-populated, while others like Ladakh extended over thousands of square kilometres of rock and snow. Punch was a feudal Jagir under its own Raja

The military administration of J&K comprised an Army HQ at Srinagar, and four brigades The Army HQ was headed by a Chief of Staff, who formerly used to be a retired British officer Maj-Gen H L Scott, CB, DSO, MC, was the last British Chief of Staff, and was succeeded after Indian Independence by Brigadier Rajendra Singh of the J&K State Force The Army HQ at Srinagar also had an Adjutant General and a Quarter Master General The four brigades were the Jammu Bde under Brig N S Rawat with HQ at Jammu, the Kashmir Bde with only the Body Guard Cavalry and 7 J&K Rifles at Srinagar and its other infantry battalions already committed in Domel-Kohala area, or posted in the north from Bunji to Leh, the Mirpur Bde under Brig Chattar Singh with HQ at Jhangar, and the Punch Bde or Force under Brig Krishna Singh in the Punch-Rawalkot area These four brigades between them had only eight infantry battalions, with some garrison police companies and animal and mechanical transport Medium machine guns were an integral part of an infantry battalion The State Force had no artillery or armour The force was dependent on local contractors for supplies, and on the arsenals in Northern Command Headquarters, Rawalpindi, for arms, ammunition and equipment There was a wireless link with Rawalpindi, but none with New Delhi

Notes

1 Govt of Jammu and Kashmir, *Kashmir Defends Democracy*, p 2
2 Drew, Fredrick, *Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, pp 28–40
3 There were numerous Hindu Chibs also
4 *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series, Kashmir and Jammu, p 5

CHAPTER II

The Tribal Invasion

THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION

On 15 August 1947, the independent 'dominions' of India and Pakistan were born and the Paramountcy of the British Crown over the Princely States in the sub-continent ended The Government of India soon declared that it considered the States free only to join India or Pakistan and not to remain independent But Jinnah, speaking for Pakistan, gave it as his opinion that they were fully empowered to remain independent of both if the rulers so wished. This statement emanated from his eagerness to make trouble for India, since the overwhelming majority of the States, had, in reality, only the choice of either acceding to India or of remaining independent

THE TROUBLES IN KASHMIR

The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir decided to postpone a decision on the problem of accession, and to have a Standstill Agreement with both India and Pakistan An offer of a Standstill Agreement was made by the Maharaja in telegrams in identical terms to both India and Pakistan on 12 August 1947 However, the State signed a Standstill Agreement only with Pakistan, and no agreement was executed with the Government of India prior to the State's accession to India on 26 October 1947 The postal and telegraph facilities in the State were placed under the control of the Pakistan Government, which promised to continue the existing arrangements by which the State imported wheat, cloth, ammunition, kerosene oil and petrol from West Punjab

Very soon, however, these amicable relations deteriorated August ushered in a hideous wave of communal rioting in the whole of the Punjab Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were butchered in West Punjab and the North West Frontier Province and their women abducted, thousands of Muslims suffered the same fate in East Punjab Millions of refugees poured out from both, travelling in huge columns The State of Jammu and Kashmir at first remained a haven for the victims of either side The people of the State, irrespective of religion, maintained their traditional harmony and stuck to the idea of communal brotherhood The State in fact became a corridor for the passage of Muslim refugees westward and the Hindu and Sikh refugees eastward But, these refugees did not fail to excite their co-religionists in the State by the stories of their sufferings, and even tried to wreak their vengeance within the State on the co-religionists of those who had wronged them

Units of the State's army, commanded by Major-General Scott,

tried their best to prevent these communal fracas and to punish those responsible for them But when they took action against some Muslim trouble-makers in the Punch area, newspapers and leaders of the Muslim League in West Punjab declared that the Maharaja's Dogra troops were murdering and terrorising the innocent Muslims of the State On 29 August, the Maharaja of Kashmir received a telegram from one Raja Yakub Khan on behalf of the people of Hazara, alleging attacks on Muslims in Punch, and threatening "We are ready to enter the State fully equipped to fight with your forces You are requested to ease the situation soon, otherwise be ready to bear the consequences "[1] About the beginning of September, raids began to take place from Pakistan into the border areas of the State On 3 September, a band of raiders, several hundred strong, attacked the village of Kotha, 27 km south-east of Jammu, and, when chased by troops of the State army, fled back into Pakistan At the same time, another band of 500 raiders armed with service rifles of 303 calibre attacked some Hindu refugees and the State petrol reservoir at Chak Haria, 10 km south of Samba On 4 September, General Scott wired to the State government at Srinagar, "Reliable reports state that on the 2nd and 3rd September, 1947, a band of up to 400 armed Sattis—Muslim residents mainly in Kahuta Tehsil of Rawalpindi district—were infiltrating into the State over the river Jhelum from Pakistan in the area of Owen, eleven miles (18 km) east of Kahuta Their purpose is looting and attacking minority communities in the State " The Prime Minister of the State sent a telegram the same day to the Chief Minister of West Punjab and the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi, informing them of these raids and requesting measures to prevent the infiltration of raiders The Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi replied denying the facts And the raids continued, with Pak Army patrols intruding into the State on 6 September and 13 September On 17 September, a band of 400 armed raiders was met about 19 km south-east of Ranbirsinghpura and retreated into Pakistan after exchanging fire with the State's armed police On 22 September, further raids were reported from a place 10 km south-east of Samba In the area of Punch also, trouble continued, and the State forces were compelled to deal with it with a heavy hand The cry then went up that the Maharaja was trying to preserve his despotism by ruthlessly putting down the movement for democratic freedom among his subjects

Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference, which was the biggest political party, was opposed to communalism, and his influence over the masses was undisputed So, to help in curbing the wave of communal fury, Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison on 29 September 1947

But, instead of improving, the situation took a turn for the worse On 4 October, an aeroplane was seen flying back and forth between Kohala and Palandri, obviously engaged in military reconnaissance of

the area The same day, about 400 raiders armed with tommy guns and bombs surrounded Chirala Feverish movement of uniformed men carried in mechanical transport was noticed across the Pakistan border Concentrations of tribal warriors were reported from Abbottabad The raiders were now giving battle to the small contingents of the State Force near Chirala and Bagh in Rawalkot area On 10 October, more raids took place in the Jammu area, and during the night of 11/12 October, 500 armed raiders crossed the river Jhelum from Hazara and entered the Punch area The raiders were not only better armed now, but were frequently assisted by batches of men in Pakistan Army's uniform Light machine guns and communication by wireless had begun to appear in the raider bands, while their probes over a wide arc of the frontier succeeded in splitting up the State Force into penny-packets strung out all along the border. The State's army was being gradually immobilised, and its capacity for coherent strategic action destroyed The stage was being set for the open invasion of Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan

ECONOMIC BLOCKADE

While the raiders were securing the dispersal of the State's army by their hit-and-run attacks, the Pakistan government was softening up the State by economic blockade Under the Agreement, the imports into the State were to be maintained at the normal level by the Pakistan government Kashmir's economy being predominantly agricultural, the State was dependent on imports for many of the necessities of life. The most important of these were cloth and petrol, and the State also needed salt and rice from outside sources Payment for these normal imports had already been made in most cases But supplies were held up in Pakistan Some of the essential commodities of which the State was being starved were the following [2]

1 Rice for four months valued at Rs 601,000/-, of which only about 406 tonnes, less than one month's quota, was received and the rest withheld
2 Two month's quota of wheat, 637 tonnes, withheld, as also supplies of gram
3 189 bales of cloth lying at Rawalpindi were not allowed to be brought in
4 Ten wagons of salt, 206 tonnes, lying at Rawalpindi detained
5 Almost the entire quota of petrol for the State, about 1 75 mn litres and 5000 tins of kerosene oil were withheld

Pakistan also sought to freeze all communications in the State Lack of petrol immobilised many of the lorry and truck fleets on which Kashmir depended for its internal transport On 12 September 1947, the Post Office at Mirpur, under Pakistani control, refused to accept registered insured covers and money orders One week later, the railway service from Sialkot to Jammu was suspended [3] Very soon, the

Pakistan Post Offices within the State refused to operate the Savings Bank accounts of the people and to cash postal certificates Cheques from the branches, within the State, of banks in West Punjab were not honoured, and remittances of money from the Lahore Currency Office for the Srinagar branch of Imperial Bank were stopped. The people suffered considerable hardships and trade came to a standstill. With all arteries blocked, a slow creeping paralysis set in within Jammu and Kashmir

NEGOTIATIONS WITH PAKISTAN

About the end of September, the State government informed the Prime Minister of Pakistan about the stoppage of essential supplies and requested him to order their release. On 2 October, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan telegraphed a reply saying that they were trying their best to send the supplies, but due to the disturbances "drivers of lorries are reluctant to carry supplies between Rawalpindi and Kohala, and it is impossible for us to spare troops for this escort " This was a particularly lame excuse, for, as the State government pointed out, "Military escort for taking European families now here could have escorted petrol supply [into the State] if local authorities had so desired "[4] Moreover, one petrol tanker had been turned back actually from the Pakistan Customs Post at Kohala, while some salt also was stopped by the Pakistan officials at the octroi barrier on the border of the State.

Very soon the problems of trade and raiding were lashed together. Pakistan, while expressing eagerness to send supplies, protested strongly against alleged atrocities by the State's army on Muslims in Punch and against the reports of armed Sikhs infiltrating into Jammu. The State government denied both allegations, and asked Pakistan to stop armed raiders entering the State from Rawalpindi district to loot and murder people within the State About the frozen imports, it acidly commented that the laudable intentions of the Pakistan government would not solve the problem when the supplies were actually held up by the local officials

The situation deteriorated rapidly The State troops were now in action against hordes of well-armed raiders all along the Pakistan border south and west of Punch, Fort Owen had to be evacuated by the State troops on 15 October, the Kotli-Punch road was breached, and heavy concentrations of the raiders and bitter exchanges of fire were going on around Bhimbar, Mirpur and Mangla

On 15 October, therefore, a cablegram was sent to the British Prime Minister detailing the raiders' activities and the economic blockade, and requesting him to advise Pakistan to treat Kashmir with fairness and justice, "consistent with the good name and prestige of the Commonwealth of which it claims to be a member "[5] On 18 October, a stiffly worded telegram was despatched to Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan requesting them once again to stop raids into the State

from Pakistan territory and send supplies The telegram concluded that if Pakistan did not stop these raids, the State government would be compelled to seek "friendly assistance" in fulfilling its sacred duty of protecting its subjects and frontier Liaquat Ali in his reply repeated the charge that the State army was killing and driving out Muslims, which must be stopped immediately, while Jinnah considered it almost an ultimatum, saying that the State authorities were putting up excuses to join the Indian Union After the receipt of these telegraphic replies, Mehr Chand Mahajan, the Prime Minister of J & K State, sent another telegram on 22 October, trying to prove his contention about the raiders' activities by quoting messages received from the agitated Hindus of Punch reporting grave danger from the Pakistani raiders and praying for quick reinforcements to save the situation

Before anything could be done in response to their prayer, all hell was let loose in the Kashmir Valley

THE INVASION PLAN

The invasion of the Kashmir Valley from Pakistan was planned with meticulous care and showed considerable strategic and tactical insight The plan was first to split up the State's army into tiny groups by means of hit-and-run attacks all along the long frontier with Pakistan In trying to control these apparently uncoordinated attacks, the defending force was compelled to distribute itself into garrisons of platoon strength spread very thin indeed along the entire southern frontier The terrain was hilly and communications primitive, so this distribution of the State army into innumerable tiny garrisons meant that it ceased to exist as a strong cohesive force able to offer battle to any strong invader anywhere along the frontier The defending army was thus hamstrung most effectually Vicious communal propaganda, at the same time, was turned in full blast at the State, and the Muslims in the frontier areas and in the State army were incited to rebel against the Hindu Maharaja and to murder their neighbours of the minority community

The motive behind the Pak invasion of Jammu and Kashmir is not difficult to guess "When the British transferred power, one of the problems left unsolved by them was that of the tribal people, and Pakistan had to tackle it Crores of rupees were spent by the British out of Indian revenues to appease these people, but the newly-born State of Pakistan could ill afford to spend so much money on them Besides, the leaders of Pakistan have made Islam the basis of modern nationality, and all their high-sounding words would lose meaning if they treated the tribal people, their co-religionists, in the British way There was again another menace growing rapidly in the N W F Province Badshah Khan (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) started his Pathanistan Movement—autonomy for the Pathans—and they were afraid lest it should disrupt Pakistan It had to be nipped in the bud before the movement lured the Pathans both of the N W F. Province and the tribal areas into one

hostile camp The urgent need felt by Pakistan to force the issue of Kashmir, and secure its speedy accession to Pakistan contained the possibility of a solution of more than one problem To hold out to the poor tribal people the alluring promise of land and plenty in Kashmir, to give them a lurid description of the supposed atrocities done to Muslims so that they might be worked up to fever pitch, and allow them a free run of the beautiful valley-why, this would secure Kashmir, solve the problem of the tribal people, kill the Pathanistan Movement and secure Pakistan's safety and prosperity—all at one stroke!"[6]

With passions aflame, lawlessness rampant and authority paralysed, the raiders struck. Thousands of tribal warriors swarmed across the frontier, and, like a mighty flood, spread deep inside the State by every bridle-road and mountain track The main invasion was planned and launched by the Army Headquarters of Pakistan and was called 'Operation Gulmarg'. Orders were issued through DO letters marked Personal/Top Secret and signed personally by the British C-in-C of the Pakistan Army, within a few days of Pakistan coming into existence Conclusive proof of the Pakistan Army's direct role in the invasion of J & K came to light through two different sources The first was Major Onkar Singh Kalkat, then serving as Brigade Major at HQ Bannu Frontier Brigade Group, under Brigadier C P Murray The Brigadier being away at Mirali outpost, Major Kalkat on 20 August 1947 received and opened an envelope marked Personal/Top Secret, and found inside a letter from C-in-C, Pakistan Army, giving a detailed plan of 'Operation Gulmarg'. He hastily called up the Brigadier, and was advised not to breathe a word about it to anybody, or else he (Kalkat) would never be allowed to leave Pakistan alive However, the Pak Army got scent of Major Kalkat's knowledge of the 'Operation Gulmarg' plan [7] Consequently, he was put under virtual house-arrest in his residence. But the officer made a daring escape and reached Ambala on 18 October 1947 At night he boarded a goods train to reach Delhi in haste The following day he met Brig Kalwant Singh, the acting CGS, Col Thapar, the acting DMO, and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Defence Minister and told them about the Pakistani plan for 'Operation Gulmarg'. But this did not cut any ice with them. While Major Kalkat was in East Punjab to search out his family, which had arrived in India from Mianwali with the help of the local Deputy Commissioner, 'Operation Gulmarg' had already started on 22 October 1947, exactly according to the plan The Indian authorities now realised their folly in showing indifference to Kalkat's invaluable information, and could trace him at Amritsar only on 24 October. He was taken to Prime Minister Nehru, who shouted at the Defence Minister and the acting DMO for not taking necessary action in the light of Kalkat's revelation.

The second source was Shri G.K Reddy, a journalist On 21 October 1947, he took a trunk call and found it was from Lt-Col Alavi, (the PRO of GHQ, Pakistan Army), to API Lahore. Alavi, not

suspecting that he was speaking to anyone but a Muslim, clearly stated that the attack on Ramkot (J & K Border Post) would begin that night. The subsequent progress of the invasion would be given to API Lahore by GHQ Rawalpindi every evening on phone, but must be published as communique from 'Azad Kashmir Government' under Palandri dateline, Palandri being given out as HQ of the 'Azad Kashmir Government' After escaping from Pakistan, Reddy gave out his story which was published in *Blitz* weekly of Bombay dated 9 June 1948

These two independent testimonies based on first-hand knowledge conclusively prove Pakistan's complicity in the invasion of J&K, apart from the fact that the strictly controlled supply of rations and petrol could not have reached the invaders without official help or connivence

According to Operation Gulmarg plan, as described by Major Kalkat, every Pathan tribe was required to enlist at least one Lashkar of 1000 tribesmen Separate instructions for their recruitment were issued to the Deputy Commissioners and Political Agents After enlistment, these Lashkars were to be concentrated at Bannu, Wana, Peshawar, Kohat, Thal and Nowshera by the first week of September 1947 The Brigade Commanders at these places were to issue them arms, ammunition and some essential items of clothings, on paper showing these issues against some Pakistan Army units Each Tribal Lashkar was also to be provided with a Major, a Captain and ten JCOs of the regular Pakistan Army The Major was to be the actual commander of the Lashkar and act as the 'adviser' of the tribal Malik nominally in command of the unit The Captain was to act as staff officer, while each of the ten JCOs was to be in charge of a company or group of the Lashkar These Pakistan regulars were to be Pathans, and to dress and live exactly like the other Pathans in the Lashkar The entire force was to be commanded by Maj-Gen Akbar Khan, who was given the code name Tariq He was to be assisted by Brigadier Sher Khan Their HQ was located in the same building as the C-in-C of the Pakistan Army, and Gen Sir Frank Messervy was, of course, privy to the whole plan [8]

All Lashkars had to be concentrated at Abbottabad by 18 October They were to be moved in civil buses which had been commandeered for this task, all moves taking place only at night. A separate area 16 km outside Abbottabad was earmarked for the Lashkars and no civilians or unauthorised persons were to be allowed anywhere near it

The broad outline of the operational plan was for six Lashkars to advance along the main road from Muzaffarabad to Srinagar via Domel, Uri and Baramula, with the specific task of capturing the aerodrome and subsequently advancing to the Banihal Pass Two Lashkars were to advance from the Haji Pir Pass direct on to Gulmarg, thereby securing the right flank of the main force advancing from Muzaffarabad A similar force of two Lashkars was to advance from Tithwal through the Nastachhun Pass for capturing Sopore, Handwara and Bandipur.

Another force of 10 Lashkars was to operate in the Punch, Bhimbar and Rawalkot area with the intention of capturing Punch and Rajauri and then advancing to Jammu In the overall plan, arrangements were made for the detailing of guides/informers from the so-called Azad Army, to all these tribal Lashkars on a very liberal scale. A minimum of four guides per company were to be attached before leaving Muzaffarabad Gen Akbar Khan was also given the task of organising the Azad Army, the major portion of which was to come from the Muslim element of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces Dumps of arms, ammunition, supplies and clothing were to be established forward of Abbottabad by 15 October These were to be subsequently moved to Muzaffarabad and Domel after D day The D day for Operation Gulmarg was fixed as 22 October 1947 on which date the various Lashkars were to cross into Jammu and Kashmir territory 7 Infantry Division of Pak Army was to concentrate in area Murree-Abbottabad by last light 21 October and was ordered to be ready to move immediately into Jammu and Kashmir territory to back up the tribal Lashkars and consolidate their hold on the Valley One infantry brigade was also held in readiness at Sialkot to move on to Jammu [9]

Unaware of the coming invasion, units of the J & K Regiment were already committed in tiny groups along the far-flung borders of the State. Early in October the dispositions of the State Force troops were as shown below

Jammu Brigade	
Brigade Headquarters	Jammu Cantonment
Jammu and Kashmir Rifles Regimental Centre	Jammu Cantonment
5th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Spread in sub-units from Kathua to Bhimbar
Jammu and Kashmir Body Guard Cavalry less one squadron	—do—
Four garrison police companies	—do—
Kashmir Brigade	
Brigade Headquarters	Badamibagh Cantonment (Srinagar)
Jammu and Kashmir Training School	—do—
One squadron Jammu and Kashmir Body Guard Cavalry	—do—
4th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles less two companies	Domel
Company	Kohala
Company	Spread in area Keran
6th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles less two companies	Bunji
Company less one platoon	Leh

Two platoons	Kargil
Coy less one platoon	Skardu
7th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles less two companies	Srinagar
Punch Area	
Force Headquarters	Punch
1st Jammu and Kashmir Rifles 8th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (relieving 1st Bn)	Spread in base area
9th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Rawalkot area (spread in sub-units)
Two companies 7th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	—do—
Mirpur Brigade	
Brigade Headquarters	Dharamsal-Jhangar
2nd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles less one platoon	Naushahra and its outposts
One platoon 2nd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Dharamsal-Jhangar
3rd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles less one platoon	Mirpur and its outposts
One platoon 3rd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Dharamsal-Jhangar
One garrison police company	—do—

The Domel front was held by the 4th Jammu and Kashmir Infantry with the headquarters of the battalion located at Domel It was composed of Dogras and Muslims in equal proportions At Domel, all the troops of 4 K I less three companies plus one platoon of B company were with the Battalion Headquarters A company plus a platoon of B company (all Dogra) and a detachment of 3-inch mortars were in the Kohala area C company (Muslims) was manning the strong defences at Lohar Gali, except for one platoon stationed at Ramkot B company (Dogras) less two platoons, was at Kupwara with one platoon at Keran D company (Muslims) less two platoons, was at Domel with one of the detached platoons at Ghori and the other platoon at Dhub A platoon of Dogras of the Headquarters company was at Battika, and another mixed platoon of the Headquarters company was at Kotli A Muslim platoon of the garrison police company was holding Tithwal One section of medium machine guns of the 8 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles was also under the command of the 4 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles at Muzaffarabad

The main strength of the defenders, therefore, was at Domel where the two approach roads from Murree and Abbottabad (both in Pakistan) met before leading towards Srinagar along the Jhelum gorge

Domel was separated from Muzaffarabad by the Jhelum river, which was spanned by the Domel bridge [10] The outposts at Lohar Gali and Ramkot, on the Pakistan border, just beyond Muzaffarabad, were the key to the whole defences

The plan of the invaders was tactically sound and, in the beginning, brilliantly executed The main attack had of necessity to be launched frontally along the motor road Apart from rifles, the standard weapon of the raiders, the main force had also a few light machine guns and travelled in about 300 civilian lorries The capture of Garhi on the Jhelum valley road between Domel and Srinagar, only some 13 km from the Pakistan border as the crow flies, would entrap the force defending Domel and make its annihilation a certainty

FALL OF DOMEL AND BARAMULA

Early in the morning of 22 October, the main column of the raiders crossed the frontier from Garhi Habibullah and attacked Muzaffarabad The traitors of the 4 K I holding the outposts at Lohar Gali and Ramkot, joined the raiders, gave them the fullest information about the strength and disposition of the defending troops and helped them to send sufficient force against each picquet of the defenders Muzaffarabad was given over to the fire and sword before its sleeping citizens could realize what had happened. The Dogra picquets, particularly the MMG section located on a high ground in the School area north of the city, fought with desperate gallantry and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy But they were engulfed in the tidal wave of the raiders who pressed on to the Domel bridge At Domel, Lt-Col Narain Singh was startled by the sudden bursts of firing and shouting in Muzaffarabad and learnt of the attack from a wounded sepoy who had managed to flee from there Within minutes of this news, however, his own headquarters was attacked by the raiders, and the Muslim troops at Domel also co-operated with the enemy The Adjutant, Captain Ram Singh, was killed as he ran to unlock the "kot" (armoury) The Battalion Headquarters and the mortar platoon fought tenaciously the whole day, suffering and inflicting heavy casualties At night fall, about 15 exhausted and wounded men who, with the commanding officer, had survived the day's battle, crept out of their positions and took to the hills They were never heard of again

Similar was the story of the other outposts and detachments. All fought desperately against overwhelming odds and then slipped out of their untenable positions during the hours of darkness The MMG section at Muzaffarabad, under Havildar Bishan Singh, managed to retreat into the hills, and reached Srinagar after terrible privations many days later. The detachment at Battika was captured while retreating. The men were disarmed, stripped naked, except for their undergarments, led to the river bank, lined up and shot dead Another detachment at Kotli also managed to retreat safely to Uri along with

was running short of ammunition and it feared encirclement During the night of 26-27 October, therefore, the defenders retreated towards Baramula In the course of this retreat, a number of roadblocks were encountered and cleared after stiff engagements The tiny band, however, was being steadily decimated by casualties, and finally it came to a roadblock covered with intense enemy fire. There the gallant band fought and perished almost to the last man Brigadier Rajendra Singh was himself killed fighting bravely He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for his supreme gallantry and devotion to duty. He and his handful of men had held up thousands of the enemy for four most valuable days and thus undoubtedly saved the entire valley of Kashmir from sack and pillage by the raiders [11]

The raiders pressed on They entered the prosperous town of Baramula in the evening of 26 October 1947 [12] The place was promptly given over to plunder and rapine Hindus and Sikhs were hunted down and killed; their houses looted and then burnt Young women were forcibly abducted and carried off without distinction of colour, caste or creed, to be sold like cattle in the streets of Rawalpindi and Peshawar, or to live and die as slaves in the mountain fastnesses of the distant tribal territory A Kashmiri Muslim patriot, Maqbool Sherwani, was shot dead in the public square for professing to treat Hindus and Sikhs as his brothers An Englishman, Col Dykes, and several of his assistants running the Missionary Hospital in Baramula, were also shot dead—for what crime is still not known.[13] Terror stalked the streets of the quaint little town The inhabitants, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike, left all their earthly possessions and fled to the hills The deserted streets lay silent, echoing only to the rattle of the raiders' nailed boots as they threaded their way between the corpses strewn around A thick pall of smoke hung over the ravaged city, and flames from burning houses cast a lurid glare over burnt out shells of what had been prosperous shops and smiling homes With many young girls and much treasure now in their possession, the raiders gloated over their good fortune.

Yet in their success lay the seeds of their doom For in the savage excitement of looting and raping, the ultimate goal of the 'Holy War' was forgotten Each man tried to grab as much wealth or as many girls as he could, and for the moment refused to be bothered with the 'infidel' Maharaja at Srinagar or the 'liberation of the oppressed Muslims' of Kashmir. Many of the raiders, loaded with loot, turned back for home, and responded to their officers' expostulations by saying that they would be back soon after depositing their treasure in security. The advance on Srinagar was thus held up for a few days, and they proved crucial For in Delhi, hundreds of kms from stricken Baramula, it had at last been decided to save Kashmir in its hour of peril, and the Indian Army was ordered to step into the breach. Even as the barbaric raiders were satisfying their greed and lust in Baramula, transport planes full of Indian troops were winging their way through the azure autumn skies, destination Srinagar.

Notes

1 Govt of India, *The Kashmir Story,* p 40
2 Govt of India, *White Paper on Kashmir,* p 20 It is said that imports of weapons, ammunition and spare parts were also totally stopped This resulted in further weakening of the State forces, since for all these vital things the State was dependent on the Rawalpindi arsenal
3 *Kashmir Defends Democracy,* p 34
4 *White Paper,* p 19
5 *Ibid ,* p 22
6 *The Kashmir Story,* p 38
7 Kalkat, O S , *The Far Flung Frontiers,* pp 40–42
8 All possible doubts about Pakistan's active role in the invasion of Kashmir stand finally resolved now after the publication of the memoirs of Maj-Gen Akbar Khan, entitled *Raiders in Kashmir* Although he has tried to play down or obscure some of the facts, he provides innumerable details to establish Pakistan's initiative and complicity conclusively Also see his interview published in "*Defence Journal*", Karachi, June-July, 1985 issue, extracts from which are reproduced in Appendix I in this book
9 Kalkat, p 41
10 It is understood that the Maharaja had decided about the middle of October that the Domel bridge must be destroyed to prevent a sudden attack from the Pakistan side But as no demolition set was available, the bridge remained intact
11 The State troops resisting the invaders near Uri were estimated to consist only of one company of infantry, one machine gun section and two mortar detachments The mortars and MGs were spared from Jammu Bde by Brig N S Rawat at great risk and flown to Srinagar The amazing fact came to light in December 1947 that during all those critical days, no less than 1854 trained troops of the J & K State Forces armed with rifles and LMGs were hiding in Badamibagh Cantonment, quite unknown to the Indian commanders See L P Sen, pp 84–85
12 *White Paper,* p 45
13 Another version says Col Dykes was associated not with a Missionary Hospital but with the St Joseph's Convent, whose Mother Superior and many nuns were also brutally murdered

CHAPTER III

India to the Rescue

INTERNAL POLITICS

Since the lapse of Paramountcy on 15 August 1947, a crisis had been brewing in the State of Jammu and Kashmir all too plainly. The mounting fever of communal frenzy all around the State and the constitutional uncertainty about the future naturally produced a curious psychosis in the minds of people Passions were inflamed and wildest rumours were current Faced with this unprecedented situation the Maharaja was bewildered It was with considerable reluctance that he agreed even to release Sheikh Abdullah from prison about the end of September But Sheikh Abdullah was given no official authority, in spite of the friendly advice of Nehru The Maharaja vacillated, and his Prime Minister, Mahajan, declared about the troubles in Punch, "I am sure that Dogra troops will be able to abet (sic) the military operations of the raiders and will smother them within a week "[1] But unfortunately thousands were to die and many towns ravaged before the State authorities realised their mistake.

The Government of India, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, pressed the Maharaja to hand over effective power to Sheikh Abdullah who had been released The attitude of Pakistan had to be ascertained, for in the past Jinnah and the Muslim League had always supported the ruler against his people, and had recently declared that decision about a state's accession could only be made by its ruler To sound the Pakistan government and to explain the stand of the National Conference, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq was sent to Lahore He met the Prime Minister of Pakistan and several ministers of the West Punjab government, but the negotiations resulted in no agreement Sadiq went to Pakistan a second time in the third week of October, but, while he was talking to the Muslim League leaders and trying to reach a compromise, Pakistan launched its invasion of Kashmir

Within a few days of the beginning of the invasion, the civil administration at Srinagar totally collapsed On 25 October, the Maharaja left Srinagar for Jammu which was the winter capital of the State [2] The Prime Minister was also away The subordinate officials, the police chiefs and public servants, all left their jobs and looked anxiously to the safety of themselves and their families As the raiders approached nearer and nearer, panic took hold of the city Shops were shuttered and bolted and the occasional pedestrian hurried on his way with an unnamed fear in his heart. The hour was approaching for anti-social elements to rise and take charge of the city, with all the attendant looting and killings But the National Conference rose to the occasion

The National Conference Peace Brigade, which had been recently organised to fight communalism, was transformed into the National Militia to defend Srinagar against the raiders The volunteers armed themselves with everything and anything they could manage to get. A few had 303 rifles, others shouldered ancient shot-guns, while even hockey-sticks were not despised Fortunately, these arms were not actually required to be used against the raiders But the effect of these bands of volunteers marching down the cobbled streets and singing patriotic songs was most heartening Morale rose with a jump The shops were reopened, and normal life returned

ACCESSION TO INDIA

By the latter half of October 1947, the Government of India was in close touch with the situation in Kashmir The Maharaja's government also informed the Government of India of the worsening situation within the State and sought help in controlling it Direct assistance of the Indian Army was out of the question till Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India, but before any help could actually be sent, the tribesmen had invaded Kashmir, changing entirely the complexion of affairs

It was only on 24 October that the Government of India got the first news of the invasion of Kashmir A message was received from Pakistan Army Headquarters that day, informing the Supreme Commander that "Tribesmen estimated 5,000 Afridis, Wazirs, Mahsuds, Swatis attacked Muzaffarabad and Domel capturing both on 22 October Tribesmen reported approaching Srinagar Kohala in danger of being attacked Tribesmen in large numbers expected to go Kashmir " Then, at 11 p m the same night, an urgent request was received from Maharaja Hari Singh, specifically asking for Indian troops to be sent to Kashmir to save it from the invaders [3] This S O S of the Kashmir government was considered in Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 25 October But the difficulties of the undertaking were all too obvious No plan had ever been made for sending Indian troops to Kashmir Srinagar was over 480 km from the nearest point of the Indian border Troops in the East Punjab were fully engaged in rescuing refugees and maintaining law and order There was no time to lose, for the way to Srinagar lay open to the raiders, with only a handful of State troops to push aside. Air transport of troops was the only way out, but that presented unprecedented problems The Srinagar landing ground, situated at the altitude of 1524 metres, fell far short of international standards, and was not even regularly maintained Landing large, fully-laden transport planes on this airstrip would be in itself a feat The troops would then find themselves stranded in a distant valley with no depots, ancillary services or regular line of communication They would be entirely dependent on the uncertain air transport for all their multifarious needs, and faced with an enemy, about whom they had little information To assess the situation,

V P Menon (Secretary, Ministry of States, Government of India) was flown to Srinagar on 25 October He found the city plunged in gloom and expecting the raiders' arrival any time On his advice, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir left Srinagar for Jammu late that night, to escape from being captured by the raiders who could then extract from him whatever they wanted Menon returned from Srinagar in the morning of 26 October, accompanied by M.C. Mahajan, the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir The Defence Committee of Cabinet discussed the situation and the urgent pleas of the State government and the popular leader Sheikh Abdullah for immediate military assistance to halt the raiders It was decided that Indian troops would be sent to the State only after its formal accession to India V P Menon flew to Jammu that afternoon and immediately returned with the formal Instrument of Accession signed by the Maharaja [4] With the acceptance of this legal document by the Governor-General of India on the evening of 26 October 1947, the State of Jammu and Kashmir became an integral part of the Indian Dominion, legally, morally and constitutionally. Once the State of Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India, Pakistan as a friendly neighbouring state should have stopped the invasion of J&K But instead of doing that she continued to provide the invaders all possible help. Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, the Chief Minister of North West Frontier Province, declared that the Pathans were determined to die to the last man for Kashmir, which as a Muslim majority state belonged to Pakistan as a matter of right [5]

The same attitude was taken by Jinnah himself When the Governor-General of Pakistan came to know of the despatch of Indian troops to Srinagar on 27 October, he became furious That night he sent instructions to Gen Sir Douglas Gracey, the acting Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army (Gen Messervy, the C-in-C, was away on leave) to move the Pakistan Army into Kashmir to seize Baramula, Srinagar and the Banihal Pass as well as to move into Mirpur district of Jammu However, Gen Gracey replied that he could not take such action without consulting the Supreme Commander, Field Marshal Auchinleck Next morning, the Field Marshal came to Lahore to explain to Jinnah that in view of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, the despatch of Indian troops to Srinagar was perfectly legal, and if the Governor-General of Pakistan insisted on sending his army to Jammu and Kashmir, all British officers and men serving in the Pakistan Army would have to be pulled out at once Consequently, Jinnah had to climb down and cancel his orders [6]

THE FIRST FLY-IN

Though on 26 October Kashmir became a part of India in law, it was most urgent that its invaders were thrown back. This meant that regular Indian troops must be sent there with the utmost speed

In the Army HQ, Brig Kalwant Singh, the acting CGS, took urgent

steps to find and prepare the troops to be sent to Srinagar. The choice fell on 1 Sikh then stationed near Gurgaon and commanded by Lieut-Colonel D R Rai The Operation Instruction issued to him informed him that the State of Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India but was being invaded by tribesmen from Pakistan To save the State from the invaders, one battalion was to be flown immediately to Srinagar, and later, in what was described as Phase II of the Operation, a Brigade Group would be moved to Jammu Lieut-Colonel Rai's task was to fly to Srinagar early on the 27th morning with the troops allotted to him and to secure the aerodrome and civil aviation wireless station there Then, if possible, he was to drive away the enemy from the neighbourhood of Srinagar and aid the local government in maintaining law and order The troops accompanying him in the morning flight were detailed as follows

Tactical Headquarters 1 Sikh
One company 1 Sikh
One composite company of RIA

The remainder of 1 Sikh battalion was to be flown to Srinagar later during the day Four flights were arranged for 27 October, with the following composition and timings

Flight	Composition	Time of departure	Place of departure
A 6 Dakotas	(Civil)	0500	Safdarjung
B 3 "	(RIAF)	0500	Palam
C 8 "	(RIAF)	1100	"
D 11 "	(RIAF)	1300	"

Each civil Dakota was to carry 15 men with their personal arms and bed-rolls, plus 225 kg of supplies, each Royal Indian Air Force Dakota was to carry an additional two men Every flight was to be tactically and administratively self-contained, so that if necessary troops could go into action immediately on landing In the third or the fourth flight were to be carried one officer and two NCOs of the RIE to instruct survivors of the State troops in the rudiments of bridge demolition, a Liaison Officer (Brigadier Hira Lal Atal) from Army Headquarters (India) to the local government, another Liaison Officer from the States Ministry and an Intelligence Officer from the Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence, also three cipher operators and a medical detachment of two officers and ten men So uncertain was the situation in the Valley that Lieut-Colonel Rai was instructed to circle the Srinagar airfield and carefully scan the countryside in case the raiders had already occupied it If so, he was to fly back and land with his men at Jammu Such a rider

to an Operation Instruction must surely be unique in modern military history, and was an indication of the unique uncertainty, hazards and difficulties facing the Indian troops when they went to Kashmir.

Even the details and location of friendly troops in the State on that date were not known to the Army Headquarters (India). The latest information available referred to the situation 36 hours earlier, during which much had happened However, at 2300 hours on 25 October, the State troops were reported to be located as follows

Kohala-Srinagar Sector

Rampur	One company (80)
Baramula	One company (100)
	Mortar section (2 mortars)
	Medium machine gun section (4 medium machine guns)
Handwara	Two platoons
Srinagar	Brigade Headquarters
	One squadron cavalry (horsed) (100)

Punch Sector

Punch	Brigade Headquarters
Hajira	One battalion (400)
Rawalkot	One battalion (300)
Bagh	Two companies (150)

Mirpur Sector

Jhangar	Brigade Headquarters
	One platoon
Kotli	One battalion (400)
	One section medium machine gun (4 medium machine guns)
	Two mortar detachments (2 mortars)
Mirpur	One company (100)
Chechian	Two platoons
Bhimbar	One squadron cavalry (horsed)
Naushahra	Two companies (150)
Munawwar	One platoon (30)
Tharochi	Two platoons (30 Hindus and 30 Muslims)

Jammu Sector

Akhnur	One platoon (30)
Chanor	One platoon (30, Hindus and Muslims mixed)
Suchetgarh	One platoon (50)
Pandorian	Two platoons (60, Hindus and Muslims mixed)
Kotha	One platoon (30)
Abtal	One platoon (30 mixed)

Basantar Ujh	One company (60)
Sherpur	One company (60)
	Detachment mortars (2 mortars)
Basoli	One platoon (30)
Jammu	Brigade Headquarters
	One company (150)

THE FIRST FIGHT

After an uneventful flight, the Dakota carrying Lieut-Colonel Rai touched down at Srinagar airfield at 0830 hours on 27 October 1947[7] Other planes of the first flight landed soon after and by 1000 hours Army Headquarters was informed that the first party was at last in Srinagar

The situation then was critical in the extreme The large raider-horde was being held by only two platoons of State troops who had dug themselves in on a high ground about 5 km east of Baramula. The handful of defenders were very hard pressed, and if they were overrun, the road to Srinagar would be open to the tribesmen The only reserve, or garrison, available at Srinagar was a squadron of horsed cavalry. So Lieut-Colonel Rai decided to send forward his sole company of troops immediately to reinforce the two platoons of the State forces This was accomplished by 1200 hours on 27 October About the same time he signalled back to Delhi, " . 500 enemy and 2000 locals near Baramula cannot be held by State forces, so will undertake task I and reinforce State troops to prevent break-through. Build up must be expedited " At 1500 hours the same day i e 27 October, another message was received at Delhi saying that Baramula had definitely fallen and was in flames In all only some 700 men of the State forces were available, and at least two companies of Indian troops were urgently required to patrol north and south of the main road in order to prevent the enemy from by-passing the Sikh positions during the hours of darkness There was hope of some delay in the enemy advance for the tribal raiders were just then busy looting Baramula But unless 1 Sikh was made up to full strength by the afternoon of 28 October, Rai was not confident of being able to save Srinagar Soon after this message, another was received from Brigadier Hira Lal Atal, who had been sent as Liaison Officer with the State government, but without any operational control over the Indian troops Atal reported that the civil administration had ceased to exist, refugees were thronging the airport and that at least one brigade would be required for the defence of the Valley.

In reply to his messages, Lieut-Colonel Rai was informed at 2305 hours on 27 October that air strafing would be carried out on 28 October, and the Brigade Tactical Headquarters and one extra battalion would be flown to Srinagar on 29-30 October, followed by another battalion by air if possible, else, by road

At the same time, on 27 October, Delhi and East Punjab

Command was ordered to establish a proper line of communication from Pathankot to Jammu as soon as possible There was then only a fair weather motor road between the two places, and all traffic on it had to be ferried across the Ravi There were only two boats available at the ferry which could transport about one battalion and 30 jeeps across the river per day But the Engineer-in-Chief reported that the Ravi could be bridged at Kathua by one 55-metre Bailey bridge, which could be put up earliest by 7 November

The defenders of Srinagar passed the night of 27/28 October in vigilance in their hastily dug positions east of Baramula But no attack developed that night The next morning, Rai himself went forward to the front line trenches with two more companies of 1 Sikh He even contemplated attacking Baramula and throwing out the raiders in short order But soon after his arrival, the enemy began a big attack in order to push through and reach Srinagar. Bitter fighting took place and the attackers were held, but after some hours it struck them that the small defensive position could easily be out-flanked When the enemy began to encircle his position, Rai went back and selected another defensive position 8 km nearer to Srinagar After this reconnaissance, he returned to his men and ordered them to withdraw to the new positions Quietly and skilfully the men fell back While seeing off the last of the rearguard, Lieut-Colonel Rai was hit in the head by a stray bullet and fell Death was almost instantaneous

Thus fell a gallant son of India, in defence of freedom and of the weak Lieut-Colonel D.R Rai was given posthumously the award of Maha Vir Chakra

THE CRITICAL DAYS OF THE BUILD-UP

The same day that Lieut-Colonel Rai was killed in Kashmir, the Army Headquarters in India took in hand preparations for a large-scale campaign By then it had become clear that the threat to the Jammu and Kashmir State was grave and powerful, and that the Indian Army must throw its full weight into the fighting before the invaders would be driven out

Delhi and East Punjab Command was therefore ordered on 28 October to carry out Phase II of Operation 'Jak', according to the first phase of which 1 Sikh had been landed at Srinagar the previous day Phase II involved the immediate despatch of one Brigade Group to Jammu via the Pathankot road At the same time, Delhi and East Punjab Command was also ordered to send one Brigade Headquarters (Headquarters 161 Indian Infantry Brigade), a signal section, one infantry battalion, and one platoon of medium machine guns to Srinagar. These reinforcements were to be despatched by air on 29 October and 30 October, so that the Srinagar contingent might be brought up to the strength of one brigade as soon as possible.

Moreover, urgent messages were flashed across that day to all the military Commands in India, asking them to report immediately what troops they could make available for the Kashmir operations The next day, 29 October, the Eastern Command and Southern Command reported on the troops they could immediately spare and troops' trains soon began rolling up towards Delhi and Pathankot Simultaneously, East Punjab Area was told to move two troops of armoured cars and one battalion out of the 50 Para Brigade to Srinagar as early as possible The Ravi crossing was to be ready for them by the night of 1/2 November, and the armoured cars, of the 7 Cavalry, were to carry with them their rations and petrol for ten days and two first-line lifts of ammunition As urgent messages continued to arrive from Brigadier Atal and others at Srinagar about the critical situation in the Valley and the need for immediate reinforcements and air sorties, on 30 October two fighter aircraft of the Royal Indian Air Force were detailed to operate from the Srinagar airstrip itself, in order to afford air support to the hard-pressed ground troops Although the Srinagar airstrip was totally lacking in all the modern facilities for combat aviation, in the succeeding days a number of Harvards and Spitfires were based on that airfield and gave invaluable support to the infantry [8]

In the Valley, the situation remained critical on 28 October. One Viceroy's Commissioned Officer and five men had been killed and fifteen men wounded that morning when Colonel Rai died The troops, 1 Sikh less two companies, therefore, withdrew some distance, together with the remnants of the State forces, now totalling only about 60 men The city of Srinagar, although unaware of the exact gravity of the situation, was tense, and only the volunteers of the National Conference kept hopeless panic at bay by their brave parades with their assorted weapons and defiant slogans The enemy was freely using artillery and mortars now, but for some unaccountable reason refrained from pressing home any major attack The fly-in of more troops continued, but one Dakota with 21 men had to force-land near Jammu due to engine trouble Another Dakota dropping supplies into Kotli was fired upon by the enemy from the surrounding hilltops It was slightly damaged, but flew on to Delhi after completing its mission Fighter planes of the Royal Indian Air Force carried out strafing sorties around the Baramula-Uri area at 1100 hours on 28 October, and destroyed a number of motor lorries

Nothing serious happened during the night of 28/29 October, and on the 29th, Tactical Headquarters 161 Indian Infantry Brigade was opened at the Srinagar airfield During the day, 56 men of 1 Sikh and 218 men of 1 Kumaon (Paratroops) were flown in, bringing the total of men flown to Srinagar since 27 October to 941. Throughout 29 October it was touch and go for the slender forces defending Srinagar At 0630 hours on 29 October, 1 Sikh less Headquarters company and D company, but strengthened by a platoon (Indian

elements) of 3/15 Punjab and a composite company of 13 Battery Royal Indian Artillery was forced back by enemy pressure It retreated and took up positions astride the road at milestone 16 near Pattan The enemy followed up, and at 0930 hours opened a fierce barrage on the 1 Sikh position with 3-inch mortars The situation appeared critical To help the gallant defenders against the far superior number of the enemy, D company of 1 Sikh was rushed forward from the airfield, its task of defending the airfield being taken over by a company of 1 (Para) Kumaon just landed from the air. A machine gun platoon (Indian elements) of 3/15 Punjab was also thrown into the battle, with the result that, after savage fighting, the attackers were beaten back Later in the day the enemy was observed concentrating once again near Pattan This concentration was promptly attacked from the air at 1510 hours Two Tempests took off from Ambala and pumped 815 shells of 20 mm calibre into the enemy concentration, killing men, and destroying lorries The tribesmen were naturally demoralised by these attacks to which they had no reply, and were seen abandoning their lorries and fleeing into the fields in complete disarray The coming enemy attack was nipped in the bud At 1635 hours another air attack, this time by two Spitfires from the Srinagar airfield, completed their discomfiture The fighting then died down, but active patrolling continued The two troops of horsed cavalry of the State forces returned from an extensive reconnaissance and reported no major raider bands south of the road between Pattan and Tangmarg A company of 1 (Para) Kumaon was also detailed to patrol from Narabal towards Pattan-Tangmarg

The position in the evening of 29 October was distinctly better, though far from satisfactory Brigadier J C Katoch had arrived to take command of 161 Brigade, and Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh took over the command of 1 Sikh, which had now Indian elements of 1/1 Punjab and 3/15 Punjab, plus 13 Battery Royal Indian Artillery under it, which gave it a strength of nearly 950 men So far, 1 officer, 1 Viceroy's Commissioned Officer and 11 Other Ranks had been killed, and 1 Viceroy's Commissioned Officer and a score of Other Ranks wounded since the start of the Kashmir operations The supply and equipment problem was still unsolved. There was an acute shortage of petrol, and 161 Brigade had to use commandeered civil buses with defective batteries The destruction of Mahura power-house had stopped the flour mills in Srinagar from working, so no flour was available from the civil sources for the troops The law and order situation was better, since 200 volunteers of the National Conference had by then been armed and were maintaining confidence among the people The tactical situation was also less dangerous, at least for the hour By the reports available, it appeared that only about 500 of the invaders were trying to push directly along the Baramula-Srinagar road, although they were the best-equipped troops among the raiders and were adequately supplied with

mortars, machine guns and mechanical transport On the other hand about 1,500 raiders were reported to be taking the route via Sopore and Bandipur, reaching Srinagar from the north This threat for the moment could be ignored, for the march round the Wular Lake was long and the road indifferent Another 200 raiders were trying to outflank the Pattan position from the south by advancing down the Tangmarg road which met the Baramula-Srinagar road at Narabal Narabal was a place of great importance, therefore, and was that day defended by 1 ((Para) Kumaon The front position was east of Pattan near milestone 16, and was held by 1 Sikh, 13 Battery Royal Indian Artillery and Indian elements of three platoons of 3/15 Punjab with 6 medium machine guns

On 30 October, reports indicated greater numbers of the enemy in the Pattan area There were about 200 lorries, and the men were estimated to total 1500–2000 During the night of 29/30 October, the enemy indulged in only some sniping of forward Indian positions, which however proved largely ineffective But at 1900 hours on 30 October, one of the Indian convoys was ambushed at the bridge and suffered several casualties The leading lorry of the three-lorry convoy had in it only a civilian driver, who was wounded The second was carrying another civilian driver and five Kumaonis Out of this, three Kumaonis were killed and one Kumaoni and the driver were wounded The third lorry also was fired at, but sustained no casualties A fighting patrol of 1 (Para) Kumaon was immediately despatched to the area, but at 1930 hours it found that the enemy had already disappeared Half-an-hour later, at 2000 hours the main position near Pattan was attacked by some 1000 raiders, who approached to within 55 metres of the defensive positions, but were then held up and thrown back Their attack was supported by light machine guns and 3-inch mortars, but the deadly stream of bullets from the Indian medium machine guns proved too much for them

That day (30 October), the Main Headquarters 161 Brigade arrived, and Brigadier J C Katoch took up the command of the Brigade At the same time, 33 men of 1 Sikh, 236 men of 1 (Para) Kumaon and 80 men of 1 Mahar were flown in, bringing the day's total to 394 men [9] Two 3 7-inch howitzers also reached Srinagar with them, and proved very welcome additions to the defenders' fire-power

On 31 October, no major engagement took place in the Valley Reports described two parties of 300–350 raiders advancing from Pattan towards Sumbal and Magam apparently to outflank the defenders' positions near Pattan from both sides But the only incident worth mention took place in the morning when Brigadier Katoch was slightly wounded in the leg by a stray bullet as he got down from his jeep to inspect the 1 Sikh positions Later during the day, Brig Kalwant Singh and Wing Commander Mehar Singh arrived at the Srinagar airfield on a visit The air force was busy in operational sorties on 31 October Three Tempests from Ambala strafed the enemy between Pattan and

Baramula, while four Spitfires and two Harvards were sent that morning to be based at the Srinagar airfield Among the troops transported by air to Srinagar on 31 October were D company of 4 Kumaon under Major Sharma, the remaining men of 1 (Para) Kumaon and 3 Field Ambulance unit During the day, therefore, 485 men and 46,240 kg of supplies were carried by air to the Valley, for which 3 Royal Indian Air Force and 33 civil Dakotas were used The civilian air crew maintained their magnificent morale and endurance shown since 27 October, and eight of the civil Dakotas did a double trip to Srinagar that day

By the last day of October, the strength of Indian troops in Kashmir and Jammu was as follows

Kashmir Valley

One Brigade Headquarters (161 Brigade)

Three infantry battalions (1 Sikh, 1 (Para) Kumaon, elements of 4 Kumaon and 1 Mahar)

One battery of artillery (13 Battery Royal Indian Artillery)

One field ambulance and other administrative units, making a total of about 2000 men

The supplies carried weighed 124,207 kg

Jammu

One battalion of infantry—3 (Para) Rajput

One company of machine guns (of 1 Mahar)

On 1 November 1947, 184 men of 1 Sikh and 81,038 kg of supplies were transported by air to Srinagar Colonel Harbakhsh Singh reached Srinagar that day and took over the command of 161 Brigade The fighting during the day was fitful, but bitter. At 0830 hours, a patrol of 1 Sikh was ambushed The Sikhs were surprised, but quickly fell in, and the fight lasted about four hours At the end, they came through with advantage, having lost five men killed and one wounded, but after killing 12 raiders, wounding five and capturing one Another patrol, of 1 (Para) Kumaon, had a slight brush with the enemy about 500 metres north of their position during which two raiders were killed and one local Kashmiri captured. Between 1300 and 1500 hours on 1 November, a fairly heavy attack was launched by the raiders against the 1 Sikh position, but was repulsed without difficulty Patrols of 1 (Para) Kumaon went towards Gandarbal and Sumbal, but could discover no enemy in the area

At nightfall on 1 November, the Indian troops were disposed as follows:

Headquarter 161 Brigade and one company 4 Kumaon	Near Srinagar Airfield
1 (Para) Kumaon less one company	Airfield
Company 1 (Para) Kumaon	Road junction Narabal

1/2 Punjab (flown in that day)	Road junction Shalateng
1 Sikh less one company	Hill east of Pattan
One company 1 Sikh	Airfield

In Jammu area, the Advance Headquarters 50 Para Brigade, one company of 1 Mahar and one company of 3 (Para) Rajput were at Jammu, one company of 3 (Para) Rajput was at Samba and a third company was at Madhopur The 3 (Para) Rajput less three companies was moving up to Jammu from Gurdaspur

Brig L P Sen arrived at Srinagar on 2 November and took over the command of 161 Brigade from Col Harbakhsh Singh, who became his Deputy Brigade Commander On that day the Kashmir front was on the whole quiet One company of 1/2 Punjab took up positions on the ridge east of Gandarbal Another company was placed between the Anchar Lake and the Baramula-Srinagar road Patrols sent out could obtain no information about any enemy parties in the areas of Sumbal or Gandarbal, but heard from various sources that gangs of raiders were moving through the countryside towards Badgam 14 km south-west of Srinagar Air activity continued on the usual heavy scale and during the day about 140 men, mostly of 1 Patiala, were flown from Ambala to Jammu Besides these men a company of 4 Kumaon was airlifted to Srinagar and approximately 68,000 kg of supplies were also carried during the day in a total of 34 Dakota sorties Tempests from Ambala and Spitfires from Srinagar airfield went out on strafing missions along the Muzaffarabad-Baramula-Srinagar road and succeeded in destroying more lorries and men of the raiders

On 3 November a bitter battle took place near the Srinagar airfield itself That morning one company of 1 (Para) Kumaon and two companies of 4 Kumaon went to reconnoitre the Badgam area The company of 1 (Para) Kumaon took up positions on a ridge near Badgam while one company of 4 Kumaon returned towards Srinagar at 1230 hours The other company of 4 Kumaon was suddenly attacked by about 700 raiders at 1400 hours at a point just north of Badgam Taken by surprise and greatly outnumbered the company fought bravely but suffered heavy casualties The raiders were apparently trying to sneak in and capture the Srinagar airfield itself When their presence was discovered they naturally tried their best to overwhelm the single company of 4 Kumaon with repeated and desperate attacks On receiving information 161 Brigade immediately sent one company of 1 (Para) Kumaon with spare ammunition to help the defenders Seven air strikes were also launched at the same time to hold up the raiders' attacks These air attacks had a very salutary effect and succeeded in killing a large number of the raiders, but the company of 1 (Para) Kumaon sent as reinforcement did not succeed in throwing the enemy back At the end of the battle the Indian casualties were 15 killed, including Major Somnath Sharma, and 26 men wounded One of the ammunition trucks was also looted by the enemy, but the enemy attacks

were at last held, their surreptitious advance on the airfield was stopped and they suffered several hundred casualties by bombing and strafing from the air and in the hand-to-hand fight Major Somnath Sharma was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his gallant action Before his death, Major Somnath Sharma had sent the following memorable message to his Brigade Headquarters—"The enemy are only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered We are under devastating fire I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round "

While this bloody battle was being fought Dakotas continued to fly in with troops and supplies at Srinagar Mountain Battery, 4 Kumaon and some signal detachments and supplies were brought in Among the supplies was a very welcome proportion of ammunition for 3 7-inch howitzers

The same day, 3 November, news was received from the Pakistan Army that on 31 October a *coup d'etat* had taken place at Gilgit as a result of which the representatives of the State's lawful government there had been overthrown and the area had passed under the control of the so-called Azad Kashmir government [10]

The news of the Badgam battle so near the Srinagar airfield and the heavy casualties sustained in that battle brought home to everybody the gravity of the situation in Kashmir The next day, 4 November 1947, Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Defence Minister, flew down to Srinagar to observe things on the spot and to study the situation They returned the same evening to Delhi and apparently impressed on the Cabinet the need for further urgent reinforcements in Srinagar The same morning at 0600 hours a squadron of armoured cars of the 7 Cavalry left Jammu for Srinagar along the tortuous 320-km hill road and over the 2,750 metres Banihal Pass It was obvious by then that the operations in Kashmir were not in the nature of a minor action against civil commotion or an ill-armed rabble, but must result in fairly heavy and prolonged fighting over an extensive area Army Headquarters, therefore, asked Delhi and East Punjab Command that day to submit promptly an appreciation of the likely course of operations, estimates of the enemy forces, number and types of own troops required and the problems of their supply and maintenance during the winter months in case the operations continued until the spring of 1948.

The same day the Pakistan Army was informed in reply to its protest against the bombing of the Kohala bridge across the Kashmir-Pakistan border by Indian aircraft that such a bombing had not been ordered and the case was being investigated To avoid any chance of such incidents in the future, Air Headquarters (India) issued orders to all Royal Indian Air Force planes not to fly within 5 km of the Pakistan border without express orders from Air Headquarters.

The Badgam battle and many recce reports showed that the raiders were fanning out from the Baramula road and spreading themselves all

over the Valley in small groups This would present a very difficult task to the 161 Inf Bde. Brig L P Sen decided that the only way to make them concentrate again and to present a good target was to offer them the great prize of Srinagar as a bait, with the possibility of bringing up their lorries by the Baramula road to carry away the loot So on 4 November he withdrew 1 Sikh from their strong positions near Pattan to a point only about 8 km from Srinagar on the Baramula road, much against the opposition of the Battalion Commander and the annoyance of Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh This withdrawal was skilfully carried out and the troops were not molested by the enemy in the process of withdrawal Air activity was further stepped up, four Spitfire and five Harvard sorties being flown against the Badgam-Baramula area

There were persistent rumours of a possible attack by the raiders during the night of 4/5 November. The troops were on the alert throughout the night but no attack came On 5 November Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh reached Srinagar by air and assumed command of the J&K Div About 400 men of the 6 Raj Rif were flown to Srinagar the same day On the ground a patrol of 1 Sikh clashed with a party of the invaders near Trikulbal about 3 km north-east of Pattan and about 22 km north-west of Srinagar In the fighting that ensued 18 raiders were killed and 3 of their vehicles captured The same day 4 Tempests from Ambala strafed the Kotli area using rockets and 20 mm shells Two Tempests and a Spitfire attacked the village of Khog 16 km west of Badgam where the raiders were reported to be staying A Harvard based in Srinagar was also sent out that day along the road from Srinagar to Jammu in order to see how far the armoured cars had reached on their way to Srinagar They were discovered near the Banihal Pass [11] About 1200 hours on 5 November the disposition of the Indian troops in the Kashmir Valley was as follows

B Sqn 7 Cav	nearing Srinagar Aerodrome
1 Sikh less two companies	near Rambagh
One company	near Parimpur
One company and attached troops from 1/1 Punjab	Malshaibagh
1 (Para) Kumaon	Airfield
4 Kumaon less two companies	north of Takia Arif Shah
One company	near Nor
One platoon	north-west of Takia Arif Shah
One platoon	north-east of Takia Arif Shah
One platoon	Takia Arif Shah
1/2 Punjab less one company	Humhom
One company	near Shekhpur
6 Rajputana Rifles	Airfield
3/15 Punjab (Indian elements)	
Five sections	at bridges nearby
One section	Malshaibagh

1 Mahar MMG	
One company	Airfield
One battery of artillery	Airfield
Six fighters	Airfield

At 0130 hours during the night of 5/6 November the invaders launched an attack against the position of 1 Sikh at a bridge This attack was held but heavy fighting continued. At 0630 hours on 6 November a troop of 7 Cavalry (armoured cars) was sent up to reinforce the 1 Sikh and air strikes were launched against the attackers Later during the day 1 (Para) Kumaon Battalion was also sent forward and the raiders' attacks were beaten back At the same time a patrol of 4 Kumaon killed four and wounded three men of the raiders in a village and another patrol killed one and wounded fifty. Some raiders were reported by a patrol of 1/2 Punjab also.

On 6 November Army Headquarters (India) ordered Delhi and East Punjab Command that the Kashmir Valley was to be held at all costs and close liaison was to be maintained between the Indian Commander and Sheikh Abdullah, who had been appointed the Administrator of Kashmir. Any incident of communal nature was to be severely repressed and all help was to be given to the Kashmir Home Guards including rifles and facilities for training.

Major-General Kalwant Singh who had reached Srinagar the previous day was faced with a number of baffling difficulties. There was only one signal section with the Headquarters 161 Brigade but it had to handle traffic of incoming and outgoing messages for the Divisional Headquarters, the Brigade Headquarters and the Headquarters of five Battalions Jammu and Kashmir had till then not been declared an operational area and no messing had been organised Viceroy's Commissioned Officers and clerks were urgently wanted for the offices just set up, typewriters and an imprest account too. Some motor vehicles had been obtained from the State but petrol and drivers for them were required. Postal arrangements were almost non-existent and the troops did not have adequate maps for the operations they had to carry out Wall maps from the Srinagar club and Nedou's Hotel were borrowed to plan the operation[1] The weather was getting cold, rain was expected and bivouac and capes were urgently required.

By the evening of 6 November the critical days for Srinagar were over. The raiders had lost the initiative because of their looting propensities displayed at Baramula. About 3500 men of the Indian Army had by then reached Srinagar and had thrown a ring of machine guns and bayonets around Srinagar and the airfield. Although the raiders were only about 8 km away from the city at the nearest point, it was now impossible for them to pierce through the positions of the defenders and capture the glittering prize almost within their grasp. On the other hand the Indian troops had recoiled adroitly before the full

force of the enemy blow could reach them and had by now consolidated the position Reinforcements including field guns and armoured cars had reached them in sufficient numbers The liberation of the Valley was about to begin

LIBERATION OF THE VALLEY

The Government of India was keen to have the raiders driven out of the Kashmir Valley as early as possible The Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 4 November 1947 discussed the situation and issued verbal orders to Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh to recapture Baramula by 15 November 1947 even if the Indian Army had to incur 500 casualties in doing so

By nightfall on 6 November, most of the troops were in position Two companies of 1 Sikh, one company of 4 Kumaon, a few guns of 32 Field Battery and one troop of armoured cars of 7 Cavalry were holding the enemy near Shalateng The remainder of 1 Sikh and of 4 Kumaon, together with the rest of B squadron 7 Cavalry and Headquarters 161 Brigade were located near the airfield and the southern approaches to Srinagar

Brig Sen planned to open a decisive battle around 10 November. By that date, he expected further reinforcements of infantry, artillery and armoured cars to reach him from Jammu Early on 7 November, he despatched one troop of two armoured cars and one Rifle troop of 7 Cavalry on a long reconnaissance via Gandarbal towards Bandipur north of the Wular Lake Soon, thereafter, however, the thousands of raiders massed near Shalateng started firing at the 1 Sikh positions The firing soon intensified, and it was clear that they were going to launch a major attack Brig Sen made plan on the spur of the moment, and ordered Lt Noel David, the 7 Cav column commander, to turn left at Krahom after Gandarbal, and bring his two armoured cars and the Rifle troop behind the raiders via Sumbal This was accomplished, the armoured cars barely managing to inch their way across a narrow wooden bridge near Krahom At the same time, a Harvard aircraft sent on a recce reported thousands of raiders collected near Shalateng, with several hundred lorries parked nearby, ready to move on to Srinagar 1 (Para) Kumaon positioned behind 1 Sikh was then ordered to move quickly and quietly to the left and get ready to attack the right flank of the enemy [12]

As soon as the 7 Cavalry troops and 1 (Para) Kumaon were in position, Brig Sen, at about noon, ordered the attack to go in And all hell broke loose

Murderous fire poured into the massed ranks of the raiders from three sides The RIAF strafed them from the air. The Kumaonis assaulted with their bayonets flashing Totally astounded, the raiders ran here and there in terror, and hundreds fell to the concentrated fire. Within twenty minutes, the battle was over, and the enemy started

fleeing desperately along the road to Baramula, leaving behind their lorries, dumps of ammunition and supplies Zainkut ridge was captured by 1 (Para) Kumaon about 1700 hours, and a company of 1 Sikh was immediately pushed through from Shalateng in civilian buses The raiders' rout was complete, and they fled back in panic, leaving about 500 of their force dead on the ground.

The raiders' headquarters, located in an orchard on the roadside near MS7, was hastily evacuated, and the advancing Indian force captured a 3-inch mortar, an MMG and a truck full of medical supplies It was a decisive victory, for the loss of only one killed and two wounded among the Indian troops The brilliant battle of Shalateng put Srinagar and the Kashmir Valley beyond the grasp of the raiders for ever Pursuing the fleeing enemy the Indian troops recaptured Pattan the same day at 1830 hours But then the lack of petrol and the unsatisfactory condition of the transport vehicles held up the advance for a vital twelve hours [13] With daylight on 8 November the Indian troops surged forward again and reached milestone 31 at 1330 hours Moving up just behind the forward troops Tactical Headquarters 161 Brigade established itself at Pattan By 1600 hours Baramula was captured By that evening (8 November) Brig L P Sen with Headquarters 161 Brigade, 1 Sikh and 1 (Para) Kumaon were at Baramula, and 1/2 Punjab at Pattan The troops required for the defence of Srinagar were set apart that day as "Sri Force" formed of 4 Kumaon, 6 Rajputana Rifles and one company 2 Dogra under Col Harbakhsh Singh Major-General Kalwant Singh and his men received congratulations from General Bucher on 8 November for their brilliant exploits in throwing the raiders back

The threat to Srinagar was driven back finally on 8 November But information was received that day that some tribal bands had infiltrated into the Shupiyan area in Kulgam district 32 km west of Anantnag This could result in serious setback for the Indian troops because tracks led from Shupiyan to Banihal and Ramban, and destruction of either the Banihal tunnel or the Ramban bridge could destroy the land line of communication from Jammu to Srinagar for many weeks As a precautionary measure therefore one company less one platoon of 3 (Para) Rajput was sent to Ramban from Jammu to defend the bridge and to patrol towards Banihal, and a squadron of the J&K Body Guard Cavalry was sent from Srinagar to Shupiyan

On 9 November the Indian troops were engaged in mopping up the Baramula area and consolidating their positions on the high ground west of the town and astride the road The Royal Indian Air Force flew four Tempest sorties that day from Amritsar over Baramula-Uri and Kotli-Rawalkot areas A despatch rider, several lorries and a bridge of boats near Muzaffarabad were hit, the last one by rockets from the Tempests 250-lb bombs were also being used now by the Royal Indian Air Force

PART II

THE WESTERN FRONT

CHAPTER IV

Relief Operations in the Jammu Sector

SERIOUS SITUATION IN THE JAMMU PROVINCE

Though by the recapture of Uri on 13 November 1947, the threat to Srinagar was removed, the situation in the Jammu Province had worsened considerably. The hostiles had seized a considerable stretch of territory close to the Pakistan border Early in October 1947 raids by ex-servicemen, armed with modern arms and equipment, had been carried out on the State Force garrisons deployed on that front The size of these raids had varied from small parties of approximately ten to a hundred. The object of these raids had been to pin down the garrisons of the State army and also to serve as a feint for the main push along the Kohala-Srinagar road The raids had well served their purpose, for they had led to a large scale rising of the turbulent Muslims on the Punch and Mirpur borders, who were supplied with arms and ammunition by the raiding forces By 15 October the raiders had penetrated into Punch and Mirpur, surrounding some of the State Force garrisons and destroying others The Muslim components of Jammu and Kashmir Forces in the Punch-Mirpur sector had deserted on 18 October with arms and ammunition and joined the raiders. A few days later the hostiles had made their main push along the Kohala-Srinagar road Whilst the main push had been in progress, all garrisons in Punch and Mirpur had been encircled

DISPOSITION OF THE STATE FORCES

The weak and isolated garrisons carried on a heroic, though unequal, struggle against heavy odds Three weak brigades were deployed in the Punch, Mirpur and Jammu sectors In the Punch sector the Brigade Headquarters was at Punch, one battalion (1 J&K Inf) held Hajira and another (9 J&K) garrisoned Rawalkot while two companies of 7 J&K protected Bagh In the Mirpur sector the garrisons were dispersed over a large area. Brigade Headquarters and one platoon were at Jhangar, while two companies held Naushahra; one battalion, supported by four medium machine guns and two mortars, garrisoned Kotli, one company protected Mirpur, two platoons held the forward post at Chechian, and Bhimbar was garrisoned by one squadron cavalry (horsed). There was a platoon at Munawwar and two platoons at Tharochi The Jammu sector was held by Brigade Headquarters and one battalion (5 J&K) group.[1]

DESPATCH OF TROOPS

As top priority was given by the Government of India to the task of saving Srinagar and the Jhelum valley, the State garrisons in Mirpur and Punch sectors had perforce to be left to carry on unaided the struggle against heavy odds. But steps were taken to establish the line of communication between Pathankot and Jammu, and on 27 October, Army HQ (India) impressed on Lieut-General Dudley Russell, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Delhi and East Punjab Command, the necessity of establishing immediately the line of communication between Pathankot and Jammu. Next day they informed him that one brigade group composed as follows would be despatched to Jammu as soon as possible under arrangements of Delhi and East Punjab Command

Headquarters 50 Para Brigade and signal section
1/2 Punjab
3 (Para) Rajput
3 Madras
Some armoured cars or tanks
One battery of field artillery
One field company IE
One mobile workshop company
One animal transport regiment less one company
Mobile veterinary section

The task of the force was to be as follows

(i) To assist the Government of Jammu and Kashmir in maintaining law and order in the Jammu area
(ii) To keep open line of communication from Jammu to Srinagar.
(iii) To reinforce the brigade group in Srinagar if necessary

Lieut-General Russell ordered two troops of armoured cars and one infantry battalion of 50 Para Brigade to proceed immediately to Srinagar via Jammu and the rest of the brigade to concentrate in Jammu The bridge over the Ravi at Madhopur was not ready for use and the troops had to be ferried across the river. On 31 October, Headquarters 50 Para Brigade, two companies 3 (Para) Rajput and two companies 1/2 Punjab were concentrated in Jammu 1/2 Punjab were flown that very day from Jammu to Srinagar

While troops were being rushed to Srinagar, 50 Para Brigade was getting ready to carry out its vital role of protecting the line of communication Advance Headquarters 50 Para Brigade, 1 Patiala, 3 (Para) Rajput and ancillary troops concentrated in Jammu by 4 November, the rest were expected to be in Jammu by 6 November When the brigade had completed its concentration at Jammu, it was expected to have the following troops under command

3 (Para) Rajput
1 Patiala
3 Madras

Squadron 7 Light Cavalry (due to arrive soon)
11 Field Battery RIA
One company 1 Mahar (MG) (arrival not definite)
32 Assault Field Company RIE
33 Field Ambulance
264 General Transport Company
2 Infantry Workshop Company

The primary role of 50 Para Brigade was to keep open the road Madhopur-Kathua-Jammu-Srinagar for supplies to get through to Jammu and Srinagar The secondary role was to maintain law and order in Jammu The supply depot on which the Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir were based was at Pathankot, and the only road from there to Srinagar was very vulnerable to attack from the raiders, as approximately 112 km of it ran along the Pakistan border and there were bridges, embankments and narrow gorges

On 4 November Brigadier Y S. Paranjape, Commander 50 Para Bde, issued orders for the protection of the line of communication. Two platoons of 7 Gorkha Rifles were to be deployed in Kathua sector, one to guard the river crossing at Madhopur and the other to guard the supply dump at Kathua Two companies of 3 (Para) Rajput were to be responsible for the sector from Kathua to Udhampur, one company in area Hiranagar and the other in area Samba. One company 1 Patiala was to be posted at Kud for the protection of the road "from excluding Udhampur to including bridge at Milestone 120 " 3 Madras was to be responsible for the sector of the road excluding bridge at milestone 120 to Srinagar, one company each was to guard the Ramban bridge, the Banihal Pass and the bridge at Pt 5228, while battalion less three companies was to be in Anantnag 1 Patiala less one company was to be assigned the task of preserving law and order in Jammu while 3 (Para) Rajput less two companies was to be in reserve at Jammu with the role of protecting the airfield

HOPES OF RELIEF FADE OUT

While 50 Para Brigade was busy protecting the line of communication and maintaining law and order in Jammu, the State Force garrisons in Punch and Mirpur sectors had been running short of supplies and ammunition and were in urgent need of air supplies and air support Bhimbar had fallen at 0400 hours on 28 October in an attack in which the raiders had used mortars and flame throwers The ring around Mirpur was tightening Kotli was heavily besieged. The garrisons of Bagh and Rawalkot in Punch sector were hard pressed In view of this serious situation, the Military Adviser, J&K, had appealed to the Government of India on 28 October for immediate air support for the State garrisons Consequently supplies had been dropped from the air on the garrison of Kotli on 28 October. No further action had been taken, except that one Tempest of No 10 Squadron had taken off from

Kotli was attacked and knocked out Concentration of enemy troops was also strafed The raiders, however, scored a notable success on this day, for Mendhar fell into their hands and the threat to Punch town became more imminent. Two Tempests operating from Amritsar were over Kotli at 0930 hours on 5 November for an offensive reconnaissance Acting on ground signs displayed by the isolated State Force garrison, the pilots strafed and fired rockets at enemy positions north and west of Kotli Later at 1245 hours, another pair of Tempests from the same base attacked more enemy positions further west of Kotli. A number of huts occupied by enemy forces were the main target, four rockets and nearly 1000 rounds of 20 mm shell were expended. Rawalkot appeared to be quiet and the State forces did not call for any offensive action. Similar air sorties were carried out on 6 November also

On 7 November, Kotli reported all types of ammunition exhausted and appealed for air drop of supplies A similar request was received from Mirpur. Three Harvards took off from Srinagar at 0900 hours to drop ammunition and medical supplies at Bagh and Rawalkot No drop was made at Bagh, as the village was found being looted and set ablaze The looters took cover on the approach of the aircraft Supplies were successfully dropped at Rawalkot, but in doing so one aircraft was shot up from the ground by the enemy in the vicinity. As a result the pilot had to make a forced landing at 1030 hours about 270 metres south-west of Punch town in a river bed. One Tempest operating from Amritsar attacked enemy positions at Kotli and Rawalkot. Two hundred and fifty 20 mm cannon shells were expended in these attacks On the same day the hostiles attacked Jhangar camp, but were repulsed

On 9 November, Tempests from Amritsar operated over Baramula-Domel and Punch area. Four sorties were flown during the day. Enemy positions were attacked at Palandri and west and north-west of Kotli Rawalkot was found covered with smoke from burning houses. On 10 November Spitfires from Srinagar paid special attention to the Kotli area. Houses indicated by the State forces were attacked with bombs On the same day the garrison at Bagh along with the refugees managed to withdraw to Punch.

On 11 November the Tempests took off from Amritsar and hovered over Kotli, Rawalkot, Bagh and Punch Rawalkot and Bagh appeared deserted Cannon fire and a few rockets were delivered at the enemy near Kotli. One Dakota dropped supplies successfully over Punch at 1300 hours on the same day, On 12 November the Spitfires attacked Kotli area again with 250-lb bombs.

THE LIGHTS GROW DIM

The situation, however, had been steadily worsening Rajauri had been captured by the enemy. The number of non-Muslims killed, wounded and abducted was reported to be 30,000 About fifteen

hundred refugees at Chingas were also reported to have been slaughtered Jhangar was besieged and Naushahra was threatened. The State troops evacuated Rawalkot and arrived at Punch with 6000 refugees The tiny garrison at Beri Pattan was attacked and the bridge damaged The morale of the garrison at Mirpur was very low on account of heavy enemy pressure. The garrison at Kotli, which had been attacked repeatedly by the raiders, was facing a desperate situation. The sands were fast running out and the lights were growing dim. In sheer desperation Mehr Chand Mahajan made a last moving appeal on 12 November to the Defence Minister of India to come to the rescue of the doomed populace of the Jammu Province It was a race against time. Another day was to pass before Uri fell to the Indian forces and the threat to the Jhelum valley was averted Then and then alone was it possible to rush reinforcements to Jammu from Srinagar and East Punjab Area to enable a force to be sent for the relief of the State Force garrisons The fate of Mirpur was sealed, Punch, Naushahra, Jhangar and Kotli were, however, to hold out against tremendous odds and to be relieved by the Indian troops

Meanwhile the Royal Indian Air Force did whatever was possible to help the hard pressed garrisons. On 13 November, the Tempests and Spitfires carried out offensive reconnaissance of Punch-Mirpur area Acting on ground signs displayed by the State forces, enemy positions were attacked with good results in and around Mirpur, Palandri and near Kotli About twenty trucks seen on the eastern edge of the town of Mirpur were bombed During one of these reconnaissances, an enemy concentration, about 250 strong, was observed west of the burnt town of Bhimbar and was successfully attacked by two Tempests

While the Indian Air Force gave some support to the State Force garrisons, Brigadier Paranjape, Commander 50 Para Bde, made preparations to move troops to Akhnur as a prelude to the advance to Kotli He ordered two platoons of 1 Patiala and a detachment of 7 Light Cavalry to reconnoitre road Beri Pattan-Naushahra at 0730 hours on 11 November The reconnaissance patrol for Beri Pattan reported bridge near milestone 36 broken Diversion of the mechanical transport was not possible The patrol advanced further on foot and met a party of hostiles 3 km short of Beri Pattan Fire was exchanged Two hostiles were killed and three wounded. The hostiles withdrew towards Beri Pattan and hills to the north

On 12 November Brigadier Paranjape ordered 1 Patiala, supported by a Squadron 7 Light Cavalry, two platoons 1 Mahar (MG), and one company 33 Field Ambulance, to move to Jhangar, clearing all opposition on the way, with a view to relieving garrisons at Mirpur and Kotli The operation was to be carried out in two phases

Phase I

One company 1 Patiala and one troop 7 Light Cavalry were to

advance from Jammu at 0400 hours on 13 November and prepare diversion for the rest of the force to cross *Nala* near milestone 36

Phase II

The rest of the force was to start from Jammu at 0600 hours on 13 November, cross *Nala* near milestone 36 by the diversion prepared for them, cross the river near Beri Pattan, and aim at getting to Jhangar as fast as possible

At 1830 hours on 12 November the reconnaissance patrol of 1 Patiala returned from Beri Pattan to Jammu and reported that the road bridge at Beri Pattan had been blown up and that enemy was occupying heights from Beri Pattan along the route to Naushahra Major-General Kalwant Singh, Group Captain Mehar Singh, and Brigadier Y.S. Paranjape reviewed the situation and it was decided to cancel the orders to 1 Patiala to advance to Jhangar Instead 1 Patiala and one troop 7 Light Cavalry were ordered to move from Jammu at 0900 hours on 13 November and concentrate at Akhnur On arrival at Akhnur the force was to patrol the area particularly along the road to Beri Pattan. The force left Jammu at 0900 hours on 13 November and arrived at Akhnur at 1140 hours Thus at the close of 13 November 50 Para Brigade had advanced to Akhnur, only about 30 km from Jammu

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The capture of Uri on 13 November by Indian troops ended the first phase of the operations in Kashmir. To decide on the future course of action, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet held a meeting on 14 November and conveyed the following instructions to Army Headquarters

(i) It was of vital importance to deny the whole stretch of the Jhelum valley road to tribal ingress into Kashmir

(ii) After this had been properly effected, it was necessary to begin replacing Indian Army personnel by State troops and police in order to concentrate them progressively in and around Srinagar This concentration was to be a prelude to a general and sustained withdrawal to India, as the demands for aid to the civil power in Kashmir lessened.

(iii) In view of this and the poor flying conditions for air transport during the winter it was desirable that the Jammu-Banihal-Srinagar road should be kept open, if possible

(iv) It was necessary to establish such a force in Jammu as was required to give aid to the civil power, to suppress disorderly elements and to protect the minority communities.

(v) It was further necessary to despatch small mobile columns to relieve and evacuate beleaguered garrisons near to the Jammu-Punch-Uri road. These columns were also to evacuate non-Muslims living in close proximity to the road, if their lives

were endangered

(vi) Lastly no effort in aid of the civil power over and above that in serial number (v) was to be embarked upon in Punch, because the advent of winter, and lack of means, rendered winter action impossible

In short the role of the Indian troops was to be limited to the two-fold task of securing the Jhelum valley road and evacuating beleaguered garrisons near the Jammu-Punch-Uri road

General Bucher was confident that the Indian Army would be able to achieve these limited tasks, but nothing additional thereto. The Army was fully stretched, and it would not be possible to clear the enemy altogether from the Jammu and Kashmir State He was particularly concerned about possible developments in the Punch area. There were a very large number of ex-soldiers living there. At least forty serving soldiers, who lived in Punch, had recently deserted with their arms There were at least 2000 other soldiers from Punch serving in the Pakistan Army and there was every likelihood of a mass desertion on their part Thus the number of hostiles operating against Punch was likely to be considerably increased Then there was the question of further tribal infiltration A study of the map of Kashmir showed clearly that in case the Pakistan government did not place any physical obstacle in the way, tribal Lashkars could motor right up to the Punch border. Thence they could infiltrate into Punch by the hill tracks in large numbers It was really in the tribesmen's best interests to use 'dispersal' tactics In the Kashmir Valley they had made the mistake of fighting like regular troops They had provided the Indian Army a good target and had been thoroughly thrashed Most probably they had learnt the lesson and in future would eschew open country The tribesman was far more dangerous, and difficult to deal with, when he was playing his own guerilla game in the hills, and this was the game Bucher saw him playing in Punch, in strength, and continuously Bucher saw the importance of extricating the isolated Kashmir troops, but he sounded a note of warning against a permanent commitment in Punch. General Bucher's suggestion was accepted by the Defence Committee Events, however, were moving fast and soon afterwards the decision to evacuate Punch was reversed

Major-General Kalwant Singh, General Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir Division, issued orders on 16 November for the rapid relief of Naushahra, Jhangar, Kotli, Mirpur and Punch. To achieve this object, the operations were to be carried out as follows

(a) A force from 50 Para Brigade and attached troops, under command of Brigadier Paranjape was to move at 0600 hours on 16 November with the utmost speed on axis Akhnur-Beri Pattan, Naushahra, Jhangar and thence to Kotli and to Mirpur Naushahra was to be secured on 16 November, a firm base established at Jhangar on 17 November, Kotli relieved on

18 November, and Mirpur relieved at the latest by 20 November The following troops were to be under command of Brig Paranjape forthwith.

Headquarters 50 Para Brigade and signal section
1/2 Punjab
3 (Para) Rajput
A squadron 7 Cavalry
One troop 11 Field Regiment
One company 1 Mahar (MG) less one platoon
One platoon 32 Field Company
Detachment 601 Supply Company
Detachment 2 Infantry Division Workshop
33 Field Ambulance less one company
14 Field Company (to be in support from 1200 hours on 17 November)

(b) A force consisting of two battalions of 161 Infantry Brigade and attached troops, under Brigadier L P Sen was to strike from Uri on 18 November towards Punch, arriving at Punch on the same day. A detachment of 161 Brigade and attached troops were to advance south from Punch and effect junction at Puri with Paranjape's force After reinforcing the Punch garrison with one battalion, the rest of Brigadier Sen's force was to withdraw to Uri.

(c) 268 Infantry Brigade (then being formed and consisting of 1 Patiala and 1 Madras) was to take over protection of the line of communication from 0600 hours on 17 November as under:

(i) Jammu-Kathua
(ii) Jammu-Banihal
(iii) Jammu-Beri Pattan

1 Patiala was to establish a company firm base at Beri Pattan and protect Paranjape's line of communication Jammu-Akhnur-Beri Pattan.

An air striking force operating from Jammu airfield was required to provide air support to 50 Para Brigade It was the intention of Air Headquarters to move No. 7 RIAF Squadron Detachment from Amritsar to Jammu and the Harvard Flight of No 1 RIAF Squadron from Srinagar to Jammu, as soon as the Jammu airfield was considered fit for use. The Jammu airfield was 885 metres long; it was to be extended to 1275 metres

Major-General Kalwant Singh's plan was adversely commented upon by General Bucher. The tasks outlined in that plan far exceeded the instructions conveyed to Major-General Kalwant Singh according to the decisions of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 November. Bucher was of the view that the uncoordinated advance of the two columns—one from Jammu and the other from Uri—was

positively dangerous, especially as the former column was still held up in the vicinity of Beri Pattan The advance of the column from Uri to Punch, with enemy still in position, appeared to him almost fool-hardy India could not afford to take risks that might result in even a minor set-back Should India be involved in any setback, then any prestige established by the successful action in Kashmir would be dissipated in a flash

In his reply to Delhi and East Punjab Commander on 20 November, Major-General Kalwant Singh pointed out that, in view of the delayed advance of 50 Para Brigade, he had already ordered Brigadier Sen on 17 November to stop the advance from Uri to Puch He further added that he had discussed with Lieut-General Russell the problem of the despatch of a strong force from Uri to Punch and the latter had agreed to the suggestion

Commander 50 Para Brigade also disagreed with the Divisional Commander's plan on several points He felt that no advance to Kotli and Punch should be undertaken without thorough preparation and without making Jhangar a firm base. Raiders were present in considerable numbers throughout the area and could interfere seriously with the long line of communication from Jammu to Kotli and Punch, running parallel to the Pakistan border within only a day's march from it. Besides establishing a firm base at Jhangar, it was prudent to relieve and hold in strength Mirpur also before proceeding to Kotli, as the fall of Mirpur to the raiders would immediately expose the Jammu-Kotli road to the raiders' attacks The dates laid down for the relief of the various places also appeared unrealistic to Brigade Commander, since no exact information was available regarding the raiders' strength, destruction of bridges, number of enemy roadblocks on the road, etc Furthermore, the troops available to him were, in his opinion, quite insufficient for establishing control over the area up to Kotli and Punch with a firm grip on the vital L of C 50 Para Brigade was much below its normal strength, as 1/2 Punjab and 3 (Para) Rajput had only about 350 to 400 men each due to the fact that their pre-partition Punjabi Mussalman companies had gone over to Pakistan 50 Para Brigade in fact had only five rifle companies, plus some supporting arms at the beginning of the advance to Kotli [2]

Commander 50 Para Bde was of the view that two battalions and two squadrons of armoured cars were required to keep the road open from Kathua to Srinagar, while a further three battalions and mountain batteries were required to maintain law and order in Jammu and relieve the State Force garrisons in Punch and Mirpur sectors For firmly holding Jhangar alone, he considered it necessary to picquet the surrounding heights with eight rifle companies, or two battalions, with a third battalion in reserve there. Naushahra, in his opinion, could be held firmly with much less troops.

ADVANCE TO KOTLI

At 1045 hours on 16 November B company 1 Patiala secured Beri Pattan for the advance of the column of 50 Para Brigade. The forward platoons were fired upon by raiders. They were engaged by 3-inch mortar and small arms fire and withdrew after suffering casualties. Having prepared the way for the advance of 50 Para Brigade, 1 Patiala passed under command 268 Brigade at 1930 hours on 16 November. HQ 50 Para Brigade arrived at Beri Pattan at 1600 hours on 16 November. It was held up there owing to the ford not being ready. Engineers considered that the ford would be ready for jeeps and light vehicles by 1200 hours on 17 November. A platoon of 14 Field Company which had arrived at Jammu during night 16/17 November was despatched to Beri Pattan to help in the task of making the ford ready. It found there a drop of nearly 9 metres to the water level. The shallowest part of the stream selected to throw rubble and stones into the water was about 60 cm deep. The light vehicles were pushed and pulled through with ropes attached, and thus these vehicles were got across by the afternoon of 17 November. The forward battalion of 50 Para Brigade crossed the ford at 1730 hours on 17 November. Tactical reconnaissance over the road Beri Pattan-Naushahra revealed several roadblocks. The column, however, pushed on to Naushahra, leaving Brigadier Paranjape with only 3 rifle companies and some MMG and a troop of 25-pounder guns at Beri Pattan, together with all the transport with rations, ammunition and kit. The State forces at Naushahra had already repulsed an enemy attack during the night 16/17 November with casualties to the enemy. Enemy at Naushahra fled after a brief engagement on 18 November. On the 18th, the troops remained at Naushahra, as ordered by Brig Paranjape, who did not want to advance with only two companies and without knowing the situation between Naushahra and Jhangar. Gen Kalwant Singh wanted Brig Paranjape to take Kotli on the 19th, so the latter, contrary to his inclination, advanced to Jhangar without being joined by the battalion at Naushahra. The advance to Jhangar was resumed at 0700 hours on 19 November and Jhangar was occupied without opposition. The advance to Kotli was, however, slowed down by numerous roadblocks and heavy sniping.[3] On 20 November 1/2 Punjab advanced from Jhangar to a place about 16 km further on, and Paranjape's Bde of five rifle companies was then stretched from Beri Pattan to 16 km beyond Jhangar i.e. about 64 km. 3 (Para) Rajput and the rest of the troops arrived at Jhangar on the night of 20 November. On 21 November the advance of 1/2 Punjab—the forward battalion—was held up by strong opposition about 24 km north of Jhangar.[4] A troop of armoured cars gave covering fire and the opposition was overcome. At 0800 hours on 22 November Indian troops attacked and captured a strong enemy position about 3 km north of Dungi. The advance continued in spite of heavy sniping and the forward troops were

about 27 km north of Jhangar On 23 November the advance was slowed down owing to the increased enemy sniping and roadblocks On 24 November, tactical reconnaissance reported enemy digging near Ban bridge south of Kotli On 25 November intelligence reports revealed that approximately two hundred hostiles had concentrated in Kotli with automatics and one mortar On 26 November a strong enemy position north of Ban bridge was captured and Indian troops entered Kotli at 1420 hours on 26 November, having completed an advance of 147 km from Jammu Brig Paranjape found in Kotli about two companies of Kashmir State troops and one company of Kashmir State Muslim troops who had been disarmed The garrison's stock of ammunition was low Their morale was lower and the men were drinking water out of filthy ponds in the town and did not go out for clean water or personal ablution There was a demoralised civil population of 9,000

The Indian force approaching Kotli from the south encountered forty-seven roadblocks in the defile through which they had to advance These roadblocks consisted of felled trees, ditches dug across the road and damaged culverts With steep hills on one side and a ravine on the other, the Jhangar-Kotli road easily lent itself to this form of delaying tactics Had the enemy covered even a quarter of his forty-seven roadblocks with fire, the advance would undoubtedly have been more costly The enemy in the Kotli area proved to be a poor marksman and indifferent tactician Apparently his force did not include the Pathan element or trained regulars yet

The garrison at Mirpur could not be relieved Mirpur, which according to refugees, was evacuated on 25 November, was in flames on 26 November On 26 and 27 November Indian patrols based on Jhangar brought in a number of refugees, who had escaped from Mirpur, and they also killed some of the enemy near a broken bridge, about 8 km from Jhangar

As information had been received that the column advancing from Uri to Punch had been attacked by the enemy and compelled to return to Uri, the idea of the advance from Kotli towards Punch was given up. Owing to the vulnerability of the long line of communication from Jammu after the fall of Mirpur, it was decided not to hold Kotli but to fall back on Jhangar, after evacuating the refugees and the State Force garrison at Kotli This was successfully accomplished on 28 November. Brig Paranjape relinquished command of 50 Para Bde soon after.[5]

ADVANCE TOWARDS PUNCH

While the relief column from Jammu succeeded in relieving the State Force garrisons at Naushahra, Jhangar and Kotli, the column from Uri reinforced the Punch garrison By 20 November the State Force garrison at Naushahra had been relieved and the position in Uri had been consolidated Operations for the relief of Punch from Uri could

therefore be taken in hand At 1000 hours on 20 November, Commander 161 Infantry Brigade received orders from Headquarters Jammu & Kashmir Division to send a force for the relief of the Punch garrison The force comprised

1 Kumaon (Para Battalion)
2 Dogra less two companies
Two troops 7 Light Cavalry
17 Mountain Battery
One machine gun platoon of 1 Mahar

1 Sikh and a troop of 32 Field Battery were left behind for the defence of the firm base at Uri The plan was for 1 (Para) Kumaon with supporting arms to be established at Punch and for the rest of the force to return to Uri The road to Punch was narrow and there were numerous hair-pin bends There were many small wooden bridges. The time of departure from Uri was 1130 hours on 20 November but much delay was caused due to a temporary and difficult diversion round a demolished bridge within 3 km of the starting point 1 (Para) Kumaon, the forward battalion, did not leave Uri till 1400 hours The column had nearly 200 vehicles of all types and sizes, which had to negotiate the diversion This crossing took much longer than was expected, with the result that a portion of the vehicle column had to halt for the night at milestone 7, away from the main force which halted for the night near Aliabad Sarai, about 32 km from Punch. This vehicle column had only a small infantry escort with it, with a troop of armoured cars towards its tail end This splitting up of the vehicle column from the main force proved a mistake, for it provided an opportunity to the enemy to halt the column by road-blocks and to launch an attack on it

21 November proved to be the crucial day of the operations The main force advanced from near Aliabad Sarai at 0700 hours and arrived at Kahuta, to find to their consternation that the bridge had been set on fire and completely destroyed

The State force picquet there had itself destroyed the bridge They had seen the lights of a large motorised column approaching, and suspected it to be the enemy The picquet had no demolition charges, and if it had waited to definitely identify the approaching column, there was a danger of the bridge being rushed and secured by the enemy before it could be burnt down So they immediately set fire to it [6]

It was a terrible setback to the operation, whatever justification there may have been for the picquet's action The main column coming to relieve Punch had to halt at the burnt Kahuta bridge, while all hands were put to the task of making a ford

While the main column was prevented by sheer bad luck from arriving at Punch, the vehicle column, which had got separated from it at milestone 7, was in sore straits All had gone well with the vehicle column during the night 20/21 November, but it had hardly resumed the advance in the morning on 21 November when it came across a road-

block around the first bend on the road As the vehicles pulled up nose to tail to investigate, fire was opened on them from all directions. The enemy had obviously made full preparations for the attack on the column and was holding all the high features in the vicinity. Attempts by the small infantry escort to capture one of the nearby features failed with heavy loss. Owing to the bends in the road the armoured cars at the tail of the column could cover only a few vehicles near to them The width of the road did not permit the armoured cars to move up the halted column. Moreover they were themselves heavily attacked One of the armoured cars had its wheel punctured This armoured car was turned back on the narrow road with the greatest difficulty and despatched to Uri, carrying information and casualties After decimating the defenders, the looting party of the raiders, which had been all the while hiding in a *Nala* immediately below the road, sprang into action and ransacked the vehicles and set them on fire Before last light the remaining armoured cars, fearing to be rushed in the dark, also left for Uri, carrying further casualties That night the enemy succeeded in burning a wooden bridge at milestone 5 on the road towards the Uri side of the column Indian casualties in this ambush were 16 killed and 14 wounded, and 24 vehicles were damaged or destroyed

When the news of the vehicle column having been ambushed was received by Brigadier Sen, he ordered 1 (Para) Kumaon less one company under command Lieut-Colonel Pritam Singh to cross over and join the Punch garrison, while he rushed back with the rest of the force at 2300 hours on 21 November The convoy proceeded very slowly due to numerous hair-pin bends The column arrived at the top of the Haji Pir Pass and harboured there for the night. The advance was resumed in the morning on 23 November and the column arrived at the scene of the disaster at about 1000 hours, almost simultaneously with the arrival of a relief column from Srinagar. The information about the ambush of the vehicles did not reach Srinagar until about 2200 hours on 21 November, when orders were received by Srinagar garrison from Headquarters Jammu & Kashmir Division to despatch troops as a relief force 4 Kumaon less two companies were detailed for this task, and they left Srinagar by mechanical transport at 0330 hours on 22 November for Uri and thence to the Punch road in order to establish picquet and help the sappers in making a diversion The Dogra Pioneer Platoon commenced work straightaway to make a diversion at the site of the burnt bridge at milestone 5 They worked throughout the night to make a diversion It was, however, a big task and could not be accomplished in so short a time Next day the Engineer detachment at Uri was called to help At the end of the day it was realised that progress was not very rapid and that it would take a good part of the next day to complete the diversion The diversion was ready by about 1400 hours on 25 November and the convoy started moving across the river Some of the lighter vehicles were able to go across easily, but the heavier ones had to be winched

across. The whole convoy crossed the diversion by 2100 hours. Of the twenty four vehicles ambushed by the enemy, about thirteen were recovered, three cannibalized, and eight thrown overboard as total loss. The only enemy activity during the three days that the convoy was halted at the burnt bridge at milestone 5 was some sniping just as the vehicles began to cross the diversion. One vehicle had a petrol tank pierced. The convoy arrived back at Uri at 0230 hours on 26 November.[7]

ATTACK ON THE URI PICQUET

While the Punch column was meeting with these mishaps, 1 Sikh at Uri had to fight hard to repel a severe attack of the hostiles. Taking advantage of the preoccupation of a large proportion of the Indian forces in the area of the ambush, about 900 enemy launched an all-out attack on a small isolated picquet of 1 Sikh across the Jhelum at Uri during night 22/23 November. The attack was well timed and the objective for this attack was admirably selected. The picquet was held by only twenty men under a Junior Commissioned Officer, it was situated on a feature, which was absolutely vital for the defence of Uri; it was separated from the rest of Uri garrison by the Jhelum river, the bridge having been previously destroyed and there being only a single plank crossing prepared by the Indian troops, it would take at least two hours for reinforcements to reach its position, even if they were readily available, and provided they took the very great risk of crossing the river at night over the plank crossing.

The first attack on the picquet started at about 2300 hours, supported by very heavy medium machine gun and mortar fire from close range. The attack was repulsed. An hour later another assault was launched with even greater strength, from three directions, in an attempt to overwhelm the picquet position. The gallant garrison of the picquet, however, fought back courageously and held up the first wave of the assault within 27 metres of its perimeter. Wave after wave of the enemy attempted to capture the picquet, but to no avail. The field guns, down at Uri, which had only just arrived and had not had the chance of previously registering the defensive fire tasks, responded to the call for support by the picquet commander and materially helped the picquet to keep the enemy at bay, firing from open sights assisted by the slight moonlight of a waning moon.

Down at Battalion Headquarters, the Battalion Commander's predicament was indeed great. He realised the desperate position of the picquet, yet with every available man already committed to the defence of Uri, he had no reinforcements to send. The *esprit de corps* and camaraderie in the battalion may, however, be well judged from the fact that the Quarter Master, Captain Joginder Singh, and his Administrative platoon (mostly cooks and sweepers) volunteered to go to the assistance of the picquet and after a most hazardous crossing of the Jhelum over the planks, in the middle of the night, rushed up the hill

shouting war cries The dogged resistance offered by the small garrison of the picquet and the dashing speed of this reinforcing platoon so demoralised the enemy that he abandoned any further attempt to capture the picquet and withdrew in haste, leaving behind a 3-inch mortar It was a most gallant fight put up by a handful of Sikhs against overwhelming odds. The loss of this picquet position would have, without any doubt, jeopardised the defence of Uri, with disastrous consequences to the whole operation.[8]

The enemy operating in Uri area showed a firm grasp of the essentials of irregular warfare He attacked the rear of the Punch column whilst it was moving through a narrow valley. His attack on the isolated picquet at Uri showed that he was a keen tactician. Intelligence reports revealed that the headquarters of the enemy groups operating in the Uri area was at Lalanka, situated in a particularly inaccessible spot near the 3050-metre summit of the Pir Panjal range Paths led from here both north to Urusa and south and south-east to Palandri and Punch The enemy got their supplies by pack mule from Palandri, 64 km from their headquarters

AIR SUPPORT

Royal Indian Air Force detachments at Srinagar and Amritsar supported the operations Ten sorties (6 Spitfires, 1 Harvard and 3 Tempests) were flown on 14 November Kotli, Mirpur and the area around these places were the main targets Reconnaissance over Naushahra was also carried out Kotli area was attacked four times. Two 250-lb bombs, six rockets and more than a thousand rounds of 20 mm ammunition were used to good effect

On 15 November Spitfires from Srinagar and Tempests from Amritsar carried out reconnaissance of the Uri-Domel road and attacked enemy positions in Punch-Mirpur area Enemy positions were also attacked in Mirpur and Kotli areas An enemy concentration, about forty strong, was attacked successfully in the vicinity of Tithwal, approximately 24 km east of Muzaffarabad One Dakota successfully dropped supplies over Mirpur

On 16 November four sorties (2 Spitfires and 2 Tempests) were flown by detachments at Srinagar and Amritsar. Hostile trucks and enemy positions were attacked in Punch and Mirpur area Enemy trucks seen on the Uri-Domel road and houses believed to be occupied by the raiders were successfully attacked

On 17 November, Spitfires and Harvards from Srinagar continued to provide air support to the troops west of Uri One Spitfire escorted a Dakota on a supply dropping mission over Kotli. For facilitating the drop, the belt of enemy positions surrounding the besieged garrison was strafed to force the hostiles to take cover Supplies were also dropped over Mirpur. In doing so, the Dakota was hit by bullets in several places The wireless operator was wounded Tempests from Amritsar

concentrated on targets in Punch-Mirpur area Enemy positions were attacked at Kotli, Mangla and Mirpur Of these, the most successful attack was made at Kotli Enemy troops taking cover in a hut and four haystacks north-east of the town were attacked with rockets and 20 mm cannon shells The hut was destroyed and the haystacks were left burning These operations considerably heartened the garrison of Kotli A group of enemy troops in the neighbourhood of Rajauri was successfully attacked by a Tempest, killing four Poor visibility hampered operations over Naushahra

On 18 November, Tempests from Amritsar carried out offensive reconnaissance of Punch-Mirpur area Targets indicated by ground forces were attacked with good results at Kotli, Mirpur and south-east of Naushahra One enemy hut was destroyed at Kotli and another at Mirpur. On this day aircraft of Srinagar detachment moved to the new base at Jammu and started operating from there to provide close support to isolated garrisons and columns in Punch-Mirpur area

On 19 November, one Harvard and one Spitfire of the Royal Indian Air Force Detachment, Srinagar, carried out offensive reconnaissance over Naushahra, Jhangar and area west of Uri On 20 November, two Spitfires operating from Jammu carried out offensive reconnaissance of Jhangar-Kotli area Enemy positions indicated by the Kotli garrison were attacked with 20 mm shells Essential spare parts of medium machine guns were successfully dropped over the besieged garrison of Kotli Tempests based at Amritsar carried out six sorties of offensive reconnaissance over Kotli, Naushahra, Mangla, Mirpur and Punch Enemy positions within the radius of 3 to 5 km around Kotli were attacked several times

On 21 November, three Spitfires and one Harvard carried out offensive reconnaissance over Baramula, Domel and Uri-Punch-Kotli roads and the surrounding area Enemy positions around Mirpur and Kotli were attacked

On 22 November, three Spitfires carried out defensive reconnaissance over areas Kotli, Uri-Punch road and Mirpur Enemy positions around Kotli were again attacked A Dakota dropped supplies over Mirpur and Kotli, but was hit by four bullets from a light machine gun

On 23 November, Spitfires and a Harvard carried out reconnaissance of Jhangar-Kotli road An enemy position indicated by the Indian troops was attacked

Five sorties (two Harvards and three Spitfires) were flown by Royal Indian Air Force detachment at Jammu on 24 November Offensive reconnaissance was carried out over Kotli, Bhimbar and Sadabad Enemy positions in the area north of Bhimbar were attacked and ten hostiles were killed. An enemy concentration in the vicinity of Sadabad was attacked effectively

On 25 November, Royal Indian Air Force aircraft carried out offensive reconnaissance over Uri-Punch, Uri-Domel-Kohala and

Jhangar-Kotli roads and also over Munawwar area Enemy positions in the vicinity of the Ban bridge (6 to 8 km south-east of Kotli) and around Kotli were attacked Approximately 100 enemy seen in a *Nala* bed, 13 km north-west of Munawwar, were attacked and six of them were killed Targets around Mirpur were bombed, north-western part of the city was, however, found burning Later Mirpur was found empty of troops and nearly 1200 refugees were seen moving east along Akalgarh-Naushahra road

Eight sorties (4 Spitfires, 3 Harvards and 1 Dakota) were flown by the detachment at Jammu on 26 November. Targets indicated by the troops in the vicinity of Kotli, Mirpur, Bhimbar and Narina were attacked One Dakota dropped supplies successfully over Punch

On 27 November, two Spitfires and two Harvards from Jammu carried out offensive reconnaissance over Kotli, Punch, Mirpur, Jammu and Domel areas An enemy concentration, about 200 strong, in a *Nala* near Mankriala, a village midway between Bhimbar and Munawwar, was attacked Two enemy positions on Kotli-Punch road were also attacked One Dakota successfully dropped supplies at Punch.

On 28 November, Tempests and Harvards flew offensive reconnaissance over Punch, Kotli, Mirpur, Naushahra and Akhnur areas. Mirpur and its surrounding areas were the main targets Six buses in Mirpur camp were attacked successfully A gun-carrier with a gun approximately 180 cm long, which looked like mountain artillery, was also spotted at a point about 6 km south-west of Mirpur. The gun-carrier was attacked and destroyed At a point approximately 8 km south-west of Mirpur a bus carrying about thirty armed men towards the south was attacked successfully with rockets Other trucks, one of which was attacked, were also seen dispersed in the same area.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIAN TROOPS

The relief operations had to be undertaken under very trying conditions The narrow, winding, dusty road from Jammu to Beri Pattan had many hair-pin bends, which slowed down the advance. The ford at Beri Pattan had to be improved before heavy vehicles could use it The road from Beri Pattan to Naushahra and beyond it to Jhangar had many obstacles in the shape of roadblocks At Jhangar the road forked into two, one leading to Mirpur and thence to the Pakistan border, and the other going north to Kotli, Punch and Uri Cut out of the side of the hills in many places and following their contours, the road was so narrow in parts that it was only suitable for one-way traffic and was intersected by innumerable unbridged *Nalas* Considerable effort had to be put in by Indian Army engineers and pioneers before this road could be made fit for military traffic [9]

In spite of these difficulties, the relief operations were carried out successfully Naushahra, Jhangar and Kotli were relieved Mirpur could not be succoured in time, but a party of the garrison managed to fight its

way out. The relief column from Uri to Punch was halted at the blown up bridge at Kahuta, and returned to Uri, but 1 Kumaon less one company managed to cross the river and reach Punch, thus enabling the garrison to hold out successfully until it could be relieved. The Royal Indian Air Force played an important part in harassing the enemy.

Before the end of November 1947, the Indian army and air force had successfully completed the preliminary task of rescuing from the raiders the Kashmir Valley, Jhangar, Naushahra and Kotli. These operations also revealed the real immensity of the task, which clearly involved prolonged and heavy fighting. The impromptu battles were over. Operations in the coming months required long-term, deliberate planning, which was immediately taken in hand.

Notes

1 These were the dispositions known to the Indian Army then But they were not quite correct Kotli, for example, had in fact only 2 coys and 2 MMGs

For detailed dispositions of the State forces as on 25 October 1947 see Chapter III The three brigades were the Jammu Bde under Brig N S Rawat with HQ at Jammu, the Mirpur Bde under Brig Chattar Singh with HQ at Jhangar, and the Punch Bde under Brig Krishna Singh with HQ at Punch

2. Comments by Brig Paranjape on the draft official history

3 1/2 Punjab was ordered to commence advance to Jhangar Brig Paranjape crossed over with his jeep and followed them and reached Jhangar that night (19th) On the way there was only minor sniping Probably the enemy was busy around Mirpur at that time

4 Brig Paranjape joined 1/2 Punjab on the 21st with the armoured cars, 3 (Para) Rajput (less 2 coys) and one coy 1/1 Punjab (Indian elements) while they were held up by strong enemy opposition He left the Bde HQ and all the transport at Jhangar which was to be the firm base with two platoons of Kashmir State Force there He only had the BIO with him

5 Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh was strongly of the view that the delay in advancing to Kotli was unjustified and resulted in the failure to relieve Mirpur The enemy then was not yet organised and was mostly busy around Mirpur etc It was the time for quick action and calculated risks A more energetic commander, he felt, could have carried out successfully the original plan

6 The responsibility for this serious setback is difficult to decide The crucial question is whether Punch garrison and the picquet had been informed of the column's expected arrival See comments of Brig Rawat and Major Govardhan Singh on the draft official history

7. Notes on Kashmir Operations by Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh Brig L P Sen had a different version to give in his book published in 1969

8 Notes on Kashmir Operations by Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh

9. *Defending Kashmir*, p 37

CHAPTER V

Planning at Army Headquarters

THE BALANCE-SHEET

With the relief of Kotli on 26 November 1947, offensive operations in the Southern sector temporarily came to an end Winter was about to set in, the Srinagar Valley would soon be snow-bound However, south of Punch, and especially in the Mirpur-Kotli-Jammu area, there being little snowfall, active operations would not be impracticable At the end of November, a review of the main events gave India a certain amount of satisfaction at the progress of her operations The enemy had struck the first blow, he had all the advantages of initiative and of a surprise attack For some time he had carried everything before him The Government of India had, however, responded energetically Although there were many anxious moments, the tables were at last turned and the initiative was wrested from the enemy The enemy was driven from Uri on 13 November and the threat to the Kashmir Valley was averted The second phase of the operations began with the advance of the column of 50 Para Brigade from Jammu to Kotli The State garrisons at Naushahra, Jhangar and Kotli were relieved Mirpur and Bhimbar could not be saved as they were too close to Pakistan's border Rajauri too did not receive help in time The column advancing from Uri to Punch was attacked and forced to return to Uri, though not before a battalion (less one company) had joined the garrison at Punch Punch held out against the attacks of the enemy Gilgit, being so far away from the main area of operations, was lost Indian forces on the whole had done surprisingly well in very trying circumstances They were, however, stretched to the utmost About the end of November, Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir were spread out as follows Headquarters Jammu and Kashmir Division was at Jammu, Srinagar garrison was responsible for the defence of Srinagar, 161 Brigade guarded the Uri-Baramula sector, 50 Para Brigade was concentrated in Jhangar-Naushahra area and 268 Brigade in Jammu protected the line of communication

The enemy, on the other hand, had no cause to consider the situation hopeless Although after the first flush of victory he had the mortification to see the fair Kashmir Valley slip from his grasp, he had secured substantial advantages From Gilgit he could develop a serious threat to Baltistan and Ladakh From Muzaffarabad area he could threaten Srinagar either by an advance up the road Uri-Srinagar or by a wide flanking move through Tithwal From Rajauri and Mendhar, pressure could be maintained against Punch The tract of the country lying near the Pakistan border from Bhimbar to Mirpur could provide

suitable bases for attacks on the long and vulnerable line of communication from Jammu to Jhangar The line of communication from Pathankot to Jammu and from Jammu to Srinagar could equally be threatened

THE DISCUSSIONS

While 50 Para Brigade had been developing a thrust towards Kotli, planning for future operations in Jammu and Kashmir had begun at the Indian Army Headquarters On 14 November, when only the threat to Srinagar had been averted and the thrust from Jammu towards Kotli had yet to be developed, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet had defined the limited objectives of the Indian Army viz , to deny the Jhelum valley road to tribal ingress in Kashmir, to maintain law and order in Jammu, to despatch small mobile columns to relieve and evacuate garrisons near Jammu-Punch-Uri road, and to avoid military commitments in Punch General Bucher, officiating Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, felt that so far no planning had been possible due to the speed of events, but the time had come to review the whole situation from both the political and military angles and to decide on long term policy

The Defence Committee of the Cabinet discussed the problem in its meeting held on 24 November 1947 The Prime Minister said that he regarded the security of Kashmir as the first priority and stressed the necessity of avoiding all risks in that theatre General Sir Rob Lockhart, KCB, CIE, MC, who had since resumed duties as Commander-in-Chief, Indian Army, asked if this question could be deferred as he had ordered two appreciations, one in respect of Kashmir and a second on the overall defence of India The Prime Minister agreed, but stressed that Kashmir must be considered as priority No 1 in the military sense The Committee agreed that the security of Kashmir was vital to the well-being of India and directed the Chiefs of Staff to take note of this when preparing their appreciation This decision of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet was of great significance, henceforth the defence of Kashmir became the chief task of the Indian Army So far the attention of the Indian Army had been distracted by other equally urgent problems—Hyderabad and the defence of the East Punjab frontier. Later events were to vindicate this decision, for the trouble in Hyderabad proved a mere flash in the pan while the danger to the East Punjab frontier remained merely a threat

On 26 November 1947, the Joint Planning Staff, under the orders of the Chiefs of Staff, prepared a paper on Kashmir setting out the army and air forces required in the coming months to defend, in conjunction with the civil power, the State of Jammu and Kashmir, in the face of marauding tribesmen Control of Kashmir was to entail not only the relieving of the beleaguered garrisons but the garrisoning of such places as Domel, Punch and Kotli and keeping open the lines of communication to these places The main features of this appreciation were as

follows

(a) **The enemy**

It was estimated that the total strength the enemy would be able to muster would be about 15,000 armed men, organised in small groups and using guerilla tactics They would try to raid and attack places such as Mirpur, Punch and the country west of Uri, where the terrain was suited to their tactics They might wait till the beginning of the spring to attack in large numbers, but this was unlikely Their object would not be large-scale attacks on established garrisons in open country They would chiefly direct their efforts to the following objectives

(i) To make India disperse its forces with the object of destroying the smaller garrisons and the maintenance columns supporting them

(ii) To cut the very vulnerable lines of communication

(iii) To incite by means of agents and communal propaganda the Muslim population in the settled areas to rebel against the government

(iv) To organise raids from Sialkot and the surrounding districts into Jammu and to cut off communications between Pathankot and Jammu

(b) **Factors affecting India's military operations**

It would be necessary to take into consideration the various factors, such as climatic conditions, terrain and communications, which would affect India's military operations The Kashmir winter was characterised by heavy rains and intermittent snow-fall Due to these severe climatic conditions, a large effort would be required in keeping open the lines of communication between the various places where troops might be located The Military Engineers considered that only the following roads could be kept open (except for brief periods after exceptionally bad weather) for the free movement of reinforcements and supplies during the winter months

(i) Jammu-Srinagar road

(ii) Srinagar-Uri road

(iii) Jammu-Naushahra road

The severity of the winter would also adversely affect air operations in support of the ground forces Aircraft available for the supply and support of ground troops at that time consisted of one Dakota, four Harvards and one squadron of eight Tempests Owing to weather conditions it would not be possible to base aircraft at Srinagar, though on certain days it might be possible to use the airfield as an Advance Landing Ground The aircraft based at Jammu would be able to give air support to the outlying southern districts of Jammu and Kashmir, but there would be very limited air operations in the mountainous regions Moreover, the Tempest,

flying at 480 km per hour, was not a suitable aircraft to be used against the tribesmen in mountainous regions

Thus climatic conditions in the succeeding four months would limit air operations and also limit the size of the forces to be kept in Jammu and Kashmir due to the difficult logistic problems

(c) **Forces required**

In order to complete the domination of Jammu and Kashmir State by a wide distribution of forces, even in such places as Domel, Punch, Kotli and Mirpur, a force of at least four infantry brigade groups, each of four battalions, plus strong administrative backing, would be required Two brigade groups would be required in the Jammu-Naushahra-Mirpur-Kotli area, one in the Srinagar area, and one in the Uri-Punch area There would be little difficulty in making available the fighting troops for such a force; the great difficulty was of their maintenance The crux of the problem was the inability to stock supplies for the force in the time available, and in the absence of air supply to guarantee its maintenance over tracks vulnerable to interference from climatic conditions and enemy action

(d) **Conclusions**

In view of the administrative difficulties, it would only be possible during the winter months to hold strongly the district of Jammu and the Valley of Kashmir From these positions it would be possible to send out self-contained fighting groups to exploit any opportunities offered The troops required for this plan could be maintained sufficiently well to allow them to carry out their role

Thus the conclusions arrived at were as follows

(i) Three brigade groups would be deployed—two in the Jammu area, and one in the Srinagar-Uri area The supporting troops i e one light armoured regiment, one mountain regiment, one field regiment and the ancillary troops would be located at the discretion of the Force Commander Air support would be provided by four Harvards and one squadron of eight Tempests

(ii) Military action west and south of Uri and west and north of Naushahra would be confined to vigorous patrolling and action by strong commando groups These groups would use every opportunity to exploit any weakness in the opposition, including if possible the destruction of the bridges at Kohala and Domel.

(iii) The State Force troops would be employed directly under command of the General Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir Force They would first require reorganisation and re-equipment

(iv) In view of their possible unreliability and the chance of vindictive action, any militia armed by the National Conference would be used only in their own territorial areas under purely

governmental control and not in any operations with troops

OVERALL MILITARY SITUATION IN INDIA

On 27 November the Joint Planning Staff prepared another appreciation, this time of the overall military situation in India The appreciation took into consideration the two main problems—Hyderabad and the defence of the Indo-Pakistan frontier

(A) The Defence of the Indo-Pakistan frontier

It seemed improbable that Pakistan government had either the wish or the intention of declaring war on India It was, however, possible that the control of the Pakistan government over the tribes of the North West Frontier Province and certain lawless elements in their own country might become so weak that it would be powerless to prevent them indulging in large scale raids across India's western border Such raids were likely to be supported by 'deserters' from the Pakistan Army, complete with their equipment Owing to their disorganisation and lack of discipline, such raiders were not likely to present any serious opposition to organised and disciplined forces The repercussions were, however, bound to be serious There would be a certain amount of panic in East Punjab, United Provinces, West Bengal and Assam There would be communal disturbances inside India, possibly on a very large scale, especially in Bengal There would be serious repercussions in Hyderabad State

Such raids into India were likely from three directions

(i) Raids into East Punjab from over the border with the object of loot and cutting our road communications to Kashmir The numbers involved in these raids might total 30,000 The raids would be well organised on this vital sector

(ii) Raids from Bahawalpur and south into the Rajputana States along the boundary Owing to the nature of the country and communications, these raids would be small and limited in their scope The total numbers involved would be about 5,000.

(iii) Raids from Sind into Kathiawar. The total strength in these raids would be about 5,000

In short, well organised raids would be directed against East Punjab, while subsidiary raids into Kathiawar and the Rajputana States would help to distract the attention from the main area of conflict

To meet such a contingency, it was necessary to deploy the forces in such a manner that the defence of East Punjab could be taken in hand, without at the same time weakening the defence of Kathiawar and the border Rajputana States One infantry division and one infantry brigade group, supported by one light armoured regiment and one medium regiment RIA, would be required for the defence of East Punjab i e one infantry brigade group in Delhi, a second in Ambala and a third in the Rohtak-Gurgaon-Hissar area The armoured brigade would be in Meerut (with one unit at Rohtak) The infantry units were already available, but

the supporting arms would have to be moved to Delhi-East Punjab Command area A detailed plan would be prepared by Delhi-East Punjab Commander, and the State Forces of Patiala, Nabha and Faridkot would be integrated into this plan

For the defence of Rajputana, one infantry battalion and one field regiment would be located at Ajmer The State Forces of Bikaner and Jodhpur, after being trained and re-equipped, would operate under the general directions of a Brigade Headquarters located in Ajmer, which would be responsible for the detailed military plan The administrative units necessary for this sector would be found from the States

For the defence of Kathiawar, one infantry battalion would be located at Rajkot and another at Ahmedabad, while the Kathiawar State Forces would be integrated in the overall military plan The military plan would be prepared by Headquarters Bombay Area, who would assume command of any operations

(B) The problem of Hyderabad

The second problem concerned Hyderabad. The situation in the Hyderabad State was fast deteriorating In view of the size and strength of the Hyderabad forces, a considerable force would have to be employed to bring the situation under control The strength of the Hyderabad forces was estimated to be six infantry battalions, one horsed regiment and 1,500 armed irregulars The supporting arms were two light armoured regiments and one field battery The fighting qualities of the troops, as well as the standard of efficiency of officers, was low Therefore, a sufficient show of force would cause a quick collapse of the Hyderabad forces, though some mopping up of the armed irregulars would take time.

To meet any emergency within the next three months, it would be necessary to reinforce India's existing forces in Secunderabad At that time those forces were so small that they could not take the offensive They comprised one armoured regiment (less one squadron), one self-propelled artillery regiment, one field regiment (moving to East Punjab) and administrative details

Apart from reinforcing the scanty forces in Secunderabad it would be necessary to have around Hyderabad a strong ring of military forces, with one infantry brigade group and one armoured brigade group in Poona-Ahmednagar area; one infantry brigade group and one light armoured regiment at Kamptee; one infantry battalion for the protection of the Vijayawada airfield, and one infantry brigade group at Bangalore

The detailed military plan would be made by Headquarters Southern Command, who would also be in overall charge of any operations Even though the problem of Hyderabad was given high priority, it was considered that the movement of forces to their new locations, the organisation of integrated brigade groups and the

switching of the maintenance movement would take a minimum of four months

(C) **Air Support**

Air support would be necessary for these two commitments—Hyderabad and the defence of the western Indo-Pakistan frontier The role of the air force would be to defend India against air attacks, to act in close support to army formations, and to make long range Fighter/Bomber attacks on vulnerable targets The total air forces available were

(i) Three squadrons consisting of 8 Tempests each at Poona (one was earmarked to move to Delhi)

(ii) Two squadrons at Kanpur (Both these squadrons were due to move to a base in Calcutta area).

(iii) One squadron of 7 Dakotas at Agra (4 of which were being used for training twin engine pilots)

(iv) About 20 Spitfires at Ambala, which were used for advanced training of pilots In an emergency these aircraft could be used in operations

(v) One squadron of 8 Tempests and one flight of 4 Harvards in Jammu

The deployment of the air force for the two commitments—Hyderabad and Indo-Pakistan frontier—would be as follows

(i) In an emergency in Hyderabad, one squadron of 8 Tempests would be moved from Poona to Gannavaram near Vijayawada and a squadron of 8 Tempests would be kept at Poona, while a squadron of 8 Tempests would be in general reserve at Kanpur

(ii) As regards the defence of the western Indo-Pakistan frontier, the Tempests were to be deployed as follows

One squadron would be moved in an emergency to Khambaliya for the defence of Kathiawar, one squadron would be moved from Kanpur to Jullundur for the defence of East Punjab, one squadron would be moved from Poona to Palam for the protection of Delhi, one squadron would be kept in general reserve at Kanpur A new flight of 6 Harvards (fitted to carry one front gun and four 20-lb bombs) would be formed and based at Jodhpur for the defence of Rajputana The Spitfires based at Ambala would be available for operations

The transport squadron located at Agra would be carrying out very restricted flying owing to the commitments in Kashmir

The threat across the Eastern Pakistan frontier would be met by the local troops

(D) **State of the Army and the Air Force**

The problem of organising the army and the air force for these tasks was beset with difficulties The army had for several months gone through a period of intense strain, it was in the process of a

reorganisation involving change of officers and men Moreover, the staff and partially trained soldiers of training establishments had perforce been used on internal security duties It was inevitable, amazingly high though the morale had remained, that in such circumstances, the training and discipline of the troops had suffered The equipment of the army had also suffered due to lack of proper maintenance The intense use of motor vehicles of all types had precluded proper maintenance There was a limit to the endurance of all weapons and vehicles There was further a grave shortage of experienced officers

The maintenance problem caused by partition of the country and subsequent dispersal of troops was very serious. Depots, sources of supply, repair facilities etc , were still based on the old layout of the Indian Armed Forces Due to the many retarding factors which existed, re-location of these would take a considerable time Technical units had been split by division These factors made the important question of maintenance difficult and even uncertain

The air force was facing the same difficulties The maintenance and equipment position was not at all satisfactory The partition had resulted in the loss of the important facilities located in West Pakistan, and Royal Indian Air Force had to set up a complete new repair organisation for aircraft and engines Owing to the lack of sufficient air force technical personnel, the Hindustan Aircraft Ltd at Bangalore was setting up this organisation But it would take some time for it to be fully operative Moreover, nearly all reserve aircraft and spares were awaiting transfer from Karachi

Royal Indian Air Force Fighter Squadrons were not established on a mobile basis and could only work from static stations. Steps were, however, being taken to make a certain number of them mobile, but this also would take some time

In short, the army and the air force badly needed a period of stability to enable them to be reorganised, trained and reorientated to make them into effective instruments of national policy

DECISIONS OF THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE (28 NOVEMBER 1947)

The Defence Committee of the Cabinet considered the Chiefs of Staff Committee paper on Kashmir in its meeting held on 28 November Discussion centred round the question of a possible offensive towards Domel The Prime Minister said that he could not understand why Indian Army had stopped at Uri instead of going on to Domel and even Kohala He considered the occupation of Domel most important, as it controlled the two roads from Pakistan into Kashmir. He felt that by remaining at Uri there was nothing to stop the insurgents coming over the bridge at Domel The Commander-in-Chief pointed out that, from the point of view of maintenance and lines of communication, grave risks would be involved in holding Domel A garrison in Domel would

battalions each.

(ii) Tactical situation

Besides the maintenance problem, the tactical situation had to be taken into consideration in making plans Operations were being conducted to bring about the state of affairs as envisaged by Delhi-East Punjab Command's Operation Instruction dated 24 November in brief, to establish a secure area at Jammu and in the Valley of Kashmir as far west as Uri This entailed pulling in the hostage to fortune at Punch and a clearing up of the situation south at Akhnur These tasks had first priority in their respective areas and no further operations could be safely undertaken until they had been completed It was necessary to withdraw from Punch While Indian troops were in Punch, the enemy concentration near Uri was bound to remain If these troops were successfully extricated, the enemy was likely to appreciate that India had adequate troops to take the offensive at Uri and would act accordingly.

(iii) Condition of troops

Another factor to be taken into consideration for the launching of the offensive from Uri was the condition of the troops The majority of the troops engaged had been employed continuously on internal defence duties for many months Previously too they had little training in mountain warfare, being chiefly concerned with jungle fighting Some units had recently come from Pakistan, where they had to hand in a considerable amount of their equipment Many units had been dissected owing to reorganisation and the transfer of half of their men to Pakistan Experienced officers had been replaced by those with less service Therefore the force lacked experience, and it would not be desirable to give them tasks beyond their capabilities

(iv) The route to Domel

The route to Domel was in a narrow gorge eminently suited to delaying tactics and long range sniping A strong force, say a brigade group, would be required to fight its way against any opposition and maintain a line of communication, if a static garrison was left at Domel This was beyond the resources available at the moment

(b) Courses open to India

Taking into consideration these various factors, Lieut-General Russell discussed the courses open to him. A pre-requisite to any advance towards Domel was the successful pulling in of the isolated Indian detachment at Punch Only after this could he regain the

initiative Therefore India might follow any one of the following courses

(i) To attempt to destroy the enemy at Uri and follow up the success by a dash for Domel before he had had time to recover

(ii) To push forward strong mobile patrols to maintain pressure and strike to the extent of the forces available, in case patrolling and reconnaissance in force disclosed that the enemy was thinning out at Uri

(iii) To bluff the enemy into believing that our intention was to continue the advance down the Jhelum valley by a display of force beyond India's actual resources The extent to which such a deception could be successful would depend largely on the loyalty of the local inhabitants, but the fact that nearly all reports were exaggerated might be exploited

(iv) To launch a full scale operation to Domel in the spring as soon as communications were improved

(c) Courses open to the enemy

The enemy would certainly do his utmost to prevent our uninterrupted contact with and withdrawal of the Punch garrison He would be likely to make use of the very broad front on which he could threaten the Indian line of communication Pathankot-Jammu-Naushahra After the successful withdrawal from Punch the enemy in that area might very well operate in the possibly more favourable line of communication area north of Jammu

(d) The Plans

After taking into careful consideration the above mentioned factors, Lieut-General Russell suggested the following plans

(i) Before launching the offensive from Uri, it was necessary to carry out the tasks outlined in Delhi-East Punjab Command's Operation Instruction dated 24 November This would entail the successful withdrawal from Punch, the concentration of a brigade group in the Naushahra area, the clearing up of the enemy threat south of Jammu, and firm protection of the line of communication Pathankot-Jammu-Naushahra

After carrying out these tasks, active patrolling would take place from the secure area thus achieved The areas from the Valley of Kashmir to Uri, and Jammu to Naushahra, would be completely under India's control and a no-man's land would be dominated by Indian troops to the greatest extent possible outside this secure area

(ii) After achieving these tasks the various plans would be as follows

If after our withdrawal from Punch the enemy was sufficiently unwise to remain concentrated in the Uri area to

allow of our striking him hard there with the resources in that area, the plan would be to keep a mobile force ready to exploit any such success as far down the Jhelum valley as possible If hit hard in this way and speedily followed up, and if all his troops were 'in the show window', it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that he would continue his withdrawal, carrying out demolitions, and might even, if panicky, damage the Domel bridge himself

Assuming that the enemy displayed his intention to hold at Uri just as long as he was not pressed, then he must be pressed as soon as possible He would withdraw in good order and stand again at the next *Nala*, having made all possible obstacles to our advance The enemy would then be followed up by mobile patrols from the Uri secure base and the maximum possible pressure brought to bear on his next position, and so on to Domel, always remembering not to 'stick our necks out' beyond our resources and remembering that Uri was the secure base to which Indian troops could return without loss of face

Assuming that the Jammu area had become completely secure, the plan would be to move troops from Jammu to Srinagar in existing transport and to maintain those extra troops there. It might be possible before the spring to reinforce the troops in Jhelum valley so that a brigade group could be made available to fight against minor opposition to Domel and stay there for the required three days to allow of the bridge being demolished

The blowing of the Domel bridge, if still desirable, should be possible in the spring Throughout the winter intense work would be carried out on improvement of the lines of communication Not only must the Pathankot-Jammu road be made fit for all-weather two-way traffic and the Banihal road greatly improved, but the road to the north, Madhopur-Ramkot-Udhampur must be pushed through with the maximum speed It would then be possible to maintain the requisite force—four brigade groups, each of four battalions and supporting arms—to allow of one brigade group to be allotted to the task of securing Domel, blowing the bridge and/or leaving a garrison there to blow the bridge on receiving orders to do so

DECISIONS OF THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE (3 DECEMBER 1947)

Lieut-General Russell's appreciation was too cautious a survey of the situation The essence of his proposals was that Punch should be evacuated so as to concentrate on driving the enemy from the Jhelum valley as far down as Domel These proposals were in consonance with his earlier instructions of 24 November But events had moved fast and a new situation had been created Mirpur had fallen Stories of

non-Muslim girls being raped and of others being sold 'like slaves' in the market for Rs 150/- had inflamed public opinion in India and had upset Nehru considerably Further, Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Minister for Defence, who visited Jammu on 2 December 1947, came back that evening with a pessimistic account of the situation, particularly in Jammu province They had discussed the situation in Jammu and Kashmir with Major-General Kalwant Singh, Air Vice-Marshal Mukerjee, His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah As a result of their visit, they learnt that

(i) considerable number of hostiles, both Pathans and Punjabees, were concentrated around Gujrat, Sialkot and Suchetgarh,
(ii) Pakistan government was actively supporting this infiltration movement, and
(iii) the Commissioner of Rawalpindi was generally directing the operations

This information, coupled with the stories of atrocities perpetrated by the raiders in the Jammu province, forced the Government of India to take a firm stand on the issue of the evacuation of Punch Mirpur could not be saved because it was too near the Pakistan border, but was there sufficient reason to sacrifice Punch and its inhabitants? Should not political considerations override military strategy? Would it be wise, on the other hand, to force a political decision on the Chiefs of Staff in opposition to their views?

At the meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet held on 3 December, Nehru emphatically declared that Punch must be held at all costs, even if it involved the risk of the sacrifice of the troops there The Commander-in-Chief urged that, as regards Punch, no decision should be made until he had received the recommendations of Lieut-General Russell The Committee accepted this suggestion As a result of further discussion, the directions of the Committee were

(i) to produce plans for a proscribed belt 5 km back from Pakistan-Kashmir border at 16 km in depth, in which all movement would be liable to air attack,
(ii) to arrange for further reinforcements i e , a brigade group for the Jammu area

JOINT PLANNING STAFF PAPER ON REINFORCEMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR DIVISION

As a result of the Defence Committee's directive, the Joint Planning Staff prepared a paper on the problems connected with the reinforcement of Jammu & Kashmir Division with four battalions and one Brigade Headquarters and Signal Section, with a view to conducting offensive operations in the area Jammu, Akhnur, Bhimbar, Naushahra, and Jhangar The following four additional battalions had already been ordered and they were expected to arrive in Jammu soon

2 Rajput

1/9 Gorkha Rifles
3 Royal Garhwal Rifles
4 Rajput

A Brigade Headquarters and Signal Section were not immediately available, but it was not considered essential 80 Brigade Headquarters and Signal Section in Delhi-East Punjab Command, then in Gurgaon area, might be available in the second half of December

As already mentioned, the most important factor in the reinforcement of Jammu & Kashmir Division was that of maintenance It was estimated that 990 vehicles would be required for lifting the tonnage for the maintenance of the forces in Jammu and Kashmir Of these, 480 vehicles were already working with Jammu & Kashmir Division The rest were to be provided from Delhi-East Punjab Command by replacing its General Transport Companies with Civil Transport Companies as the latter became available Although some of these could be made available in a few days, the total number of vehicles required for Jammu and Kashmir Division would not be available before the end of December It would, therefore, be necessary to airlift supplies until the additional maintenance lift could be assured by road

To ease the maintenance position it was necessary to improve the line of communication The maintenance of two brigades in the area Jhangar-Akhnur-Jammu would require a good, fair-weather track from Pathankot, Jammu, Akhnur, Beri Pattan and Naushahra to Jhangar But the track was bad and, owing to lack of time, it would not be possible to make it into an all-weather road The track Pathankot-Jammu was already under improvement as a fair-weather track However, owing to difficulties in obtaining civilian labour, progress was considerably behind schedule Moreover, the heavy traffic was cutting up badly the present track In the maintenance of the additional troops it would therefore be essential to increase the Engineer effort on this track The track Jammu-Akhnur-Beri Pattan-Naushahra-Jhangar passed over ground reasonably good for heavy traffic for the first 32 km Then it became a narrow hill road with weak culverts and bridges and with a soft approach to the ferry at Beri Pattan From Beri Pattan to the west the road was again narrow, tortuous and very soft Considerable improvement to this track was necessary to sustain any form of continued traffic even in fair weather Owing to the soft nature of the ground and weak culverts and bridges, there could be no guarantee of any continued traffic during the winter rains For improving and maintaining the road Pathankot-Jammu-Beri Pattan-Naushahra, it was estimated that one field company, four pioneer companies, one Tipper company, two General Transport platoons of 30 vehicles each, and eight D 4 Angle Dozers would be required Arrangements had already been made to provide the above units, except the pioneer companies Steps would be taken to provide the latter

The conclusions arrived at by the Joint Planning Staff were that it

would be possible to reinforce Jammu and Kashmir Division by four battalions and to maintain the line of communication from Pathankot to Jhangar, though the route running so close to the Pakistan border would be vulnerable and liable to interruption by enemy action

The Joint Planning Staff also considered the problem of maintenance of the Punch garrison Owing to the continuous threat of enemy action on the road Uri-Punch, the garrison could be maintained by road only if a major operation was launched each time a convoy moved from Uri to Punch and back, and if several bridges were rebuilt Moreover, the Haji Pir Pass would be snowbound in the winter months In fact it would be extremely difficult to maintain the garrison in Punch unless it could be supplied by air Supply by air, however, depended on two important factors. (i) extension of the airfield in Punch to enable it to accept Dakotas,[1] (ii) ability of the garrison at Punch to keep the airfield secure At that time little information was available on either of these points Lieut-General Russell had been asked to examine this problem Any decision in this matter could only be made after considering his recommendations

JOINT PLANNING STAFF PAPER ON 'PROSCRIBED ZONE'

Besides discussing the problem of reinforcement of Jammu & Kashmir Division, the Joint Planning Staff prepared a paper on 'proscribed zone' In view of the terrorisation and massacre of the non-Muslim population along the southern and western borders of Jammu and Kashmir State, they were asked by the Chiefs of Staff to consider the creation of a proscribed zone 5 km away from the Pakistan frontier and 16 km deep, covering an area from Munawwar to Bagh This proscription would entail the evacuation of the villagers from the area, so as to leave the field clear for military and air action against the enemy

It was not an easy problem The terrain was favourable to enemy action and the enforcement of this policy would also add to the refugee problem

In Jammu, the length of the zone envisaged was about 160 km Looking at it from Munawwar westwards, the first 16 km was open country intersected by *Nalas* and riverbeds, where movement was comparatively easy After that the country became sharply hilly for another 32 km, and from thence to Bagh it was a series of ridges In and around Mirpur the country opened up and had a number of roads and tracks leading from Pakistan into Kashmir towards the north Air action here would be easier and more successful than over the rest of the strip Except for the first 32 km, it was a tract of country which suited the guerilla tactics of the enemy. On the other hand, this part of the country was not suitable for operations by regular troops Due to lack of suitable connecting roads and other lines of communication, Indian commanders could not manoeuvre their forces in strength Further, due to the

difficulties of maintaining the troops, it was not possible to have strong garrisons to dominate the countryside Hence to clear the area and hold it by ground forces alone was not a practicable proposition

From the aspect of the Air Force, the extremely broken and hilly nature of the terrain and forests, which covered parts of it, formed good cover for the enemy Due to lack of motorable roads practically all hostile movement would be on foot This would give the hostiles an advantage for they would hear the approaching aircraft in time to take cover. This meant that some infiltration would always be possible even by day The task would, therefore, require detailed observation of the ground from low altitudes Low flying would, however, be restricted by the hilly country. Further, bad weather would interfere with flying but would assist the raiders, who were believed to be capable of movement in the dark

The proscribed area would include in broad terms the whole of the Bhimbar Tehsil, half of the Mirpur Tehsil and the Tehsils of Kotli, Sudhnutti and Bagh Within the area lay about twenty-two large villages, of which the most important were Dewa, Bhimbar, Kasguma, Mirpur, Chaumukh, Sena, Palandri, Kotli and Bagh The non-Muslim population, which would be affected by the proscription plan, totalled approximately 15,000, the main concentration being in the Bhimbar Tehsil. Clearing this area would lead to serious repercussions The non-Muslims and the loyal Muslims would flock to Jammu This would put a great strain on the Jammu administration, which was even then finding the refugee problem a hard one to solve This influx of refugees could also lead to communal clashes in Jammu town and its environs

After careful considerations of all these factors, the Joint Planning Staff were of the opinion that proscription as envisaged by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, could not be enforced fully, but that partial proscription could be enforced only in the plains and the areas around Kotli-Mirpur-Chaumukh and Bhimbar In view of the problematical efficacy of the results, however, it would be advisable not to enforce the proscription plan but to step up the air effort

DECISIONS OF THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE (5 DECEMBER 1947)

The Joint Planning Staff's two papers—reinforcement of Jammu & Kashmir Division by an extra brigade, and the proscribed zone or *cordon sanitaire* on the Jammu-Pakistan border—were considered by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet in its meeting held on 5 December 1947 Discussion centred round the problem of the evacuation of Punch The proposal of the Chiefs of Staff to evacuate Punch was supported by the Governor-General, who gave a short appreciation of the situation He considered that, once having decided to take the risk of sending troops to Srinagar, and getting there in time, victory at Srinagar was certain. Operations in Jammu were, however, the exact

THE DECISION NOT TO EVACUATE PUNCH

After the meeting was over, General Lockhart asked Brigadier Melsop, Brigadier General Staff, Delhi-East Punjab Command, to see Nehru and explain to him the situation in Punch. Nehru was absolutely firm that for political reasons there must be no withdrawal from Punch Thereupon General Lockhart wrote a personal letter to Lieut-General Russell to brief him for his meeting with Nehru on the next day He told Russell to put his case very tactfully as Nehru was strongly opposed to the evacuation of Punch General Lockhart instructed Lieut-General Russell to take the following line

(i) To present quietly the military problem as he saw it

(ii) To point out that a disaster at Punch would have worse repercussions than a withdrawal from it (A capitulation might mean the destruction of our own and the Jammu and Kashmir State troops, and the massacre of a large proportion of the non-Muslim population and refugees)

(iii) To explain that, of course, if he and the government decided that the risk must be taken, his orders would be obeyed and every effort would be made to hold Punch at all costs to the last round and the last man

General Lockhart frankly told Lieut-General Russell that he had never liked this venture into Punch. To have a force of 2000 there with rations for 5 days and a civil population of 45,000 (10,000 locals + 35,000 refugees) with food for 14 days, and a road line of communication which was cut and liable to be closed because of the snow-blocked Haji Pir Pass for 100 days, and a precarious air supply (a dubious airfield which would not take intensive air traffic, and weather which made ability to fly at all uncertain) seemed to him to be taking a grave risk of disaster

The Prime Minister discussed the Kashmir situation with Lieut-General Russell at Jammu on 6 December 1947 Amongst those present were His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Major-General Kalwant Singh and Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad (Minister for Law and Order in Jammu and Kashmir State) Lieut-General Russell outlined the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and said that he had welcomed, from a military point of view, the previous decision of the Cabinet which planned a withdrawal from our forward commitment and left us a force of eleven or twelve battalions to act offensively to the extent of our resources on the three routes available (i) Srinagar-Domel, (ii) Jammu-Naushahra-Jhangar, (iii) Jammu-Bhimbar This ensured security in the areas already held and permitted offensive action at our own discretion without leaving hostages to fortune, which isolated garrisons outside the secure area were likely to become Initiative would be cramped if the enemy knew that we must take steps to relieve such isolated garrisons More troops could be maintained in the Jammu area, but considerable risks would be incurred in attempting to maintain larger forces forward of this

There was danger in deciding against the evacuation of Punch town The maintenance of Punch town by air had many hazards At that time the airfield was being prepared for landing, but the ability of the Punch garrison to keep this secure was problematical The number of aircraft available for the supply of Punch was very small Supply dropping would probably have to be resorted to with a consequent loss of some of the supplies

The relief of Punch town by land was not easy. The line of communication to Naushahra was vulnerable to enemy attacks It would be uneconomical to try and relieve Punch from Uri owing to the length of Srinagar line of communication and the fact that the road Uri-Punch was in enemy hands, the bridges demolished and the Haji Pir Pass likely to be snowed up by 20 December. Considerably greater striking force could be maintained from the south against Punch than from the north with the same expenditure of military effort, Russell said

The Prime Minister declared emphatically that the raiders must be evicted from the country It was most important that refugees should be looked after It was a pity that Kotli had had to be evacuated; he, however, fully realised the necessity for this in the circumstances which then obtained But it would be most unwise even to contemplate an evacuation from Punch town Such action would give encouragement to the enemy at a critical time; the fate of the refugees would be terrible, and the prestige of the Government of India would greatly suffer He said that he was sure that there would be a change in the political relationship between India and Pakistan. If the change was for the better, the Punch problem would be simplified, if for the worse, then we must develop all the more strength in this area This emphatic statement clinched the issue and Lieut-General Russell assured Nehru that Major-General Kalwant Singh and he would do their utmost to make a success of this operation, though they would want a bit of good luck on their side

Pt Nehru showed considerable courage and political foresight in making this bold decision against the advice of the Delhi-East Punjab Commander and the Chiefs of Staff—all of them highly experienced British officers Political considerations overrode those of military strategy Coming events were to prove that the dangers which the military authorities had pointed out were not unreal, the loss of Jhangar on 24 December 1947 was to prove their contention that the line of communication Jammu-Naushahra-Jhangar was vulnerable to enemy attacks Risks there were undoubtedly, but they had to be taken. It is a lasting tribute to Nehru's vision that Punch held out to the bitter end, and was spared the horrors which befell the inhabitants of Mirpur, Kotli and other pillaged towns

THE FINAL PLAN

(a) Appreciation

By 6 December planning at Army Headquarters was finalised On the basis of that planning, Lieut-General Russell, on 10 December 1947, issued instructions to Major-General Kalwant Singh Russell's appreciation envisaged the following three-fold thrusts

(i) **Northern thrust (Kashmir Vale)**
With the decision to hold Punch and the impossibility of passing a relieving column over the road Uri-Haji Pir Pass, the initiative returned to 161 Brigade It was no longer called upon to open the road to Punch and could thus operate freely again The enemy appeared at that time to be in strength around Uri in anticipation of our likely advance from Uri to Punch He would soon realise that no attempt was being made to open the road towards Punch unless a deception plan to keep him of that opinion was arranged. This situation, skilfully handled, seemed to offer an opportunity of catching the enemy on the wrong foot.

(ii) **Central thrust (Naushahra-Kotli-Punch)**
In this sector there was at that time little enemy interference until Naushahra was passed It was, therefore, essential that every effort should be made to maintain this very satisfactory state of affairs, otherwise picketing this route would use up more troops. In front of Jhangar enemy resistance was likely to be strong and, as it would be obvious that we were trying to make contact with Punch, surprise, except local surprise on the battlefield, would be difficult to achieve An alternative deception thrust towards Palandri might keep the enemy guessing for a short time and prove valuable, but the striking force must not be unduly weakened

An adequate striking force north of Kotli, to gain strong contact with the Punch garrison advancing to meet the relieving column, would appear to be a complete brigade group. Additional troops would be required for the protection of the line of communication Thus approximately six or seven battalions and supporting arms would have to be maintained on this difficult line of communication, in addition supplies, ammunition and stores for the Punch garrison would have to be passed along this route It was, therefore, necessary to have an estimate of the time which would be required to achieve a build-up for this operation, in order to be able to estimate the air supply required for Punch

(iii) **Southern thrust (Akhnur-Munawwar-Bhimbar)**

The enemy had been reported active south-west of Akhnur Bhimbar, being one of their road-heads, was likely to be strongly defended

The fact that the road as it approached Bhimbar ran very close to the Pakistan frontier was an impediment, as Pakistan territory must on no account be violated

A mule track existed from Naushahra to Bhimbar, which might offer an opportunity for surprise, if a force on pack could operate against Bhimbar from the north in conjunction with the main advance on Bhimbar from the east

The value of this operation was very great, as success would automatically give a degree of protection to the central thrust line of communication, with Bhimbar captured as a secure base, southern protection of the advance to Punch would be simplified, troops not required to be left in Bhimbar would be passed to the north over the pack route to Naushahra, thus increasing the strength available there for operations towards Punch

(b) **Tasks**

Based on the above appreciation, Major-General Kalwant Singh's task in general would be to secure the maximum area of Jammu and Kashmir State with a view to relieving Punch and driving the raiders from the remaining State territory His tasks in particular would be as follows

(i) To build up a sufficient force on the central thrust line to relieve Punch town
(ii) To advance on Bhimbar
(iii) To gain control of the Jhelum valley as far west as possible, inflicting the maximum embarrassment on investors of Punch from the direction of Uri

(c) **Engineer tasks**

The Engineer tasks would be mainly concerned with the improvement of the line of communication and the ferry at Beri Pattan 14 Field Company would be in support of the forward brigade, 22 Field Company would be working on the improvement of the line of communication from Akhnur including operation of the ferry at Beri Pattan, 69 Field Company would be in reserve at Jammu on arrival from Shahjahanpur The scope of the operations forward of the ferry at Beri Pattan would be determined by the forces which could be maintained and the stocks which could be built up with 70 vehicles per day, as two class 9 rafts, which were in operation at Beri Pattan could ferry across only 70 vehicles per day in daylight This could be increased by operating more rafts, which were available at Madhopur Alternatively,

the two existing rafts could operate at night with artificial light, but due to the nature of the banks and the current, this was not advisable. Each additional raft would increase the capacity by 30 vehicles An increase in the capacity of the ferry was, however, of no value unless the road was capable of heavier traffic

(d) Administration

(i) Troops operating on the northern thrust must not exceed 4000, unless General Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir Division, could make his own arrangements to increase this number and supply them

(ii) Delhi-East Punjab Command would eventually take over delivery of supplies to Jammu, though protection from Kathua would still remain under the command of General Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir Division

(iii) The success of the central thrust would depend on the administrative build-up on this line of communication It would be necessary to have at Jammu, Akhnur and Naushahra adequate supplies and POL (Petrol, oil and lubricant) besides ample stock of ammunition and other stores

(iv) The maintenance of Punch would need close attention The Royal Indian Air Force estimated that they could make two sorties daily, each delivering 2720 kg They preferred to fly supplies for Punch from Jammu Delhi-East Punjab Commander would, therefore, arrange for supplies for Punch to be flown from Delhi to Jammu so that the stocks in Jammu were not depleted in meeting the requirements of the troops in Punch

The strategic objectives and broad plans were now clear, and operations could be launched accordingly

Notes

1 It is claimed that there was no airfield in Punch, till a Harvard airstrip was made near the palace by Brig Pritam Singh at the instance of Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh

CHAPTER VI

Loss of Jhangar

(December 1947)

While Army Headquarters was finalising the future plans, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir appeared fairly well stabilised Enemy sniping continued, however, and local skirmishes were a regular feature of the limited operations which lasted from 27 November to 9 December From 10 December the tempo of activity increased The enemy became more aggressive and directed his attacks against the vulnerable Indian line of communication (Jammu-Jhangar), culminating in his capture of Jhangar on 24 December and the fierce but unsuccessful attack on Naushahra on 26 December Indian efforts were largely concentrated on consolidating the position at Uri, warding off enemy attacks on Punch and guarding the vulnerable line of communication

URI SECTOR

Some 4000 to 6000 raiders were estimated to be operating in Uri sector Many wore serge battle-dress and the force was reported to include some men from Pakistan's South Waziristan Scouts. The methods employed by these men, including their system of defences, indicated that they had been trained and were being led by professional soldiers They employed a large number of 3-inch mortars

161 Infantry Brigade held in strength the forward position at Uri The following troops constituted the garrison of Uri [1]

Headquarters 161 Brigade
Squadron 7 Cavalry
1 Sikh
4 Kumaon
Company 1 (Para) Kumaon
Company 1/1 Punjab (Indian elements)
Company 1 Mahar (medium machine gun) less one platoon
One troop 32 Field Battery
One platoon 32 Assault Field Company
3 Light Field Ambulance
4 Field Surgical Team

Some re-grouping of the Uri garrison was carried out and the defence of the perimeter strengthened 1 Sikh was withdrawn from the perimeter into reserve, and 4 Kumaon took their place towards the end of November 1947 2 Dogra was spread along the line of communication from Baramula to Uri Srinagar garrison consisted of 6 Rajputana Rifles and odds and ends of rear parties of 161 Infantry Brigade and State Force elements in the Badamibagh Cantonment [2]

4 Kumaon manned the picquets at Uri As there was a concentration of about a thousand enemy in the area Gohalan-Thajal, the picquets were mainly on the ridge which led south to Sank D company had picquets named Jitter and Jitterbug, while still further south B company manned the forward picquet called Diamond It was the forward picquet of Diamond on the Sank ridge which had to bear the brunt of enemy attacks On 1 December 1947 the enemy attacked this picquet The attack lasted from 1630 hours to 1930 hours, but was repulsed, with 25 hostiles killed and 25 wounded The defenders lost one Naik and one Sepoy was wounded On 6 December, enemy switched the attack to a picquet across the Jhelum The enemy was engaged by medium machine guns and dispersed Following up this success A company manning this picquet sent out on 8 December a fighting patrol to the village Mukdam Saiyidan

On 10 December, 4 Kumaon made an attempt to clear the enemy from part of the Sank ridge D company (Dogras) and a platoon from B company advanced from picquet Diamond to attack the enemy in village Muhri Doba The attack was very successful Encouraged by this success, C company, holding a spur of the main Sank ridge, made a daring attempt to attack the enemy position on the adjoining spur C company was supported by a platoon from 1 (Para) Kumaon The attack yielded good results—about 80 hostiles were killed and 50 wounded Indian casualties were 5 killed The hostiles hit back and launched an attack at 2030 hours on the same day with two companies on picquet Jitter, but were repulsed

THE BHATGIRAN AFFAIR

A concentration of the raiders was reported on the high hills overlooking Uri from the south-east The raiders heavily sniped the Uri garrison and posed a threat to the roads leading from Uri towards Srinagar and towards Punch So it was decided to dislodge them from those hills and 1 Sikh (less A coy) moved out at 0700 hrs on 12 December from Uri, led by the CO, Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh The Sikhs found no difficulty in brushing aside the opposition in the area of the enemy's outer picquets, and reached the main enemy position along the top of the ridge What happened then, and why, is far from clear[3] All that can be said with certainty is that, when the battalion started moving back to Uri by a different route down the hill side, the raiders suddenly opened fire from three sides The B coy under Major Ajaib Singh, which was leading the way back, was pinned down and was extricated with difficulty after a desperate fight by a platoon of D coy under Jem Nand Singh, a veteran of World War II and the winner of the Victoria Cross There was confused and fierce fighting, and heavy losses were inflicted and suffered Jem Nand Singh earned a Maha Vir Chakra to add to his Victoria Cross, but fell in the battle, riddled by an LMG burst from close quarters Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan

Singh, and Major Ajaib Singh, both received bullet wounds, and the total casualties suffered by 1 Sikh were 1 officer, 2 Junior Commissioned Officers and 57 Other Ranks killed, and 2 officers, 4 JCOs and 55 ORs wounded The battalion was left in no position to undertake any further operations for some time Enemy casualties were estimated to total about 300 killed and 500 wounded

The withdrawal of 1 Sikh was facilitated by an inspiring example of courage and skill shown by the Boys platoon of 4 Kumaon This platoon was the only reserve available at Uri when news reached there of this fierce enemy attack on 1 Sikh. The platoon was rushed up to the picquet line and skilfully deployed there by the platoon commander The Sikhs withdrew through the platoon, and the raiders following them up suddenly found themselves under murderous fire from well-sited positions Many of them were mowed down before the rest collected their wits and fled back the way they had come

After the engagement at Bhatgiran, enemy continued his pressure on the picquets, especially Jitter and Jitterbug On 13 December, the picquet Jitterbug was jittered by a small enemy party After an exchange of small arms fire the raiders melted away Next day a platoon attacked picquet Jitter The raiders bumped against booby traps, suffered casualties and retired in confusion Undeterred by this failure, one company of hostiles renewed the attack on picquet Jitter on 15 December They were mortared and machine gunned and dispersed There was then a lull for about three days On 19 December approximately 60 hostiles attacked both the picquets, Jitter and Jitterbug After an engagement, which lasted for twenty minutes, they retired in confusion

Some reorganisation of 161 Brigade then took place. As the fighting efficiency of 1 Sikh had suffered due to heavy losses in the engagement at Bhatgiran, the battalion was relieved by 6 Rajputana Rifles and moved to Srinagar for rest. The relief was completed by 22 December, although one of the companies was still detained at Baramula Srinagar garrison as such was dissolved and Colonel Harbakhsh Singh took over the command of 1 Sikh, in addition to carrying out the duties of Station Commander, Srinagar [4]

PUNCH BRIGADE

The Punch garrison, consisting of approximately 2000 State Force troops, had been reinforced by 1 (Para) Kumaon (less one company) in November 1947 On 10 December, the Punch garrison was set up as a brigade to be known as Punch Brigade The estimated strength of the enemy in the Punch sector was about 3000 The use of automatics and mortars by the hostiles liberally almost every day indicated that they were receiving a regular supply of ammunition Intelligence reports revealed that they were bringing the ammunition over the Lachman Pattan bridge, west of Palandri The main

approaches to Punch open to the raiders were two, i e , Palandri-Punch track and Garhi-Bagh route, the latter was reported fit for mechanical transport.

RIAF considerably helped the Punch garrison by attacking enemy positions and thus blunting the edge of their attacks The Tempests and Harvards based at Jammu flew offensive reconnaissance over Punch, which helped to raise the morale of the garrison On 4 December, the Tempests subjected enemy positions north-east and north-west of Punch, as indicated by the ground forces, to 20 mm cannon fire Then again, on 7 December, enemy positions in the immediate vicinity of Punch were engaged by rockets and 20 mm cannon On 8 December a Dakota successfully dropped supplies over Punch On the same day, enemy targets north of Punch were bombed with good results On 9 December a Dakota dropped ammunition supplies to the garrison at Punch On 12 December a Dakota engaged on dropping ammunition supplies to the garrison at Punch was shot up from the hills to the west of Punch, but landed safely at Punch

To facilitate a regular flow of supplies, Brigadier Pritam Singh, Commander, Punch Brigade, decided to construct an airstrip Hundreds of refugees worked hard to complete it With the completion of the airstrip, supplies could be landed at Punch instead of having to be air dropped Even heavy or fragile equipment not suitable for air dropping could now reach Punch On 13 December the RIAF landed a section of Mountain Battery The arrival of the guns eased the situation a good deal, for the enemy was compelled to withdraw his mortars out of the range of the guns and the town was spared further shelling

On 14 December the Dakotas flew 11 sorties from Jammu to Punch, carrying small arms, ammunition and supplies weighing about 29,940 kg The returning aircraft carried from Punch to Jammu 35 civilian casualties and 80 sick State Force troops Henceforth the Dakotas were almost continuously employed, carrying food and ammunition supplies from Jammu to Punch The weather, however, was not always kind Rain often rendered Jammu airfield unserviceable But even this could not deter the RIAF from its momentous task and, as an alternative, supplies were carried from Amritsar

By carrying food and ammunition supplies and by attacking frequently enemy positions, the RIAF undoubtedly played a significant role in helping the beleaguered garrison of Punch to hold out against the persistent attacks The mountain guns airlifted to Punch were worth their weight in gold The infantry, supported by the guns, won an initial success when they attacked and captured a hill south of Punch during night 12/13 December The enemy had been occupying this hill since 3 December and had prepared well dug-in positions The loss of this hill chagrined the raiders a good deal and the tempo of their attacks increased considerably during 16–18 December

The Indian picquets were well sited to meet the threat. South of the Punch river, a ridge spread out like an arc, rising to a succession of peaks from Pt. 5024 through Pt 6005 to Pt 6876 (Pir Margot Ghazi) From this main ridge, many spurs jutted out towards the Punch river like the fingers of a hand On one of these spurs leading through Barari Gala were two picquets To the right on the adjoining spur, was a third picquet with a fourth picquet on the next spur These picquets on the three main spurs were sited to prevent an enemy attack developing from the south of Punch North of Punch, the picquets were sited on the right and west of the Betar *Nala* On the right of the Betar *Nala*, a ridge stretched like a bow, with one end touching Punch and another sloping to Chuhana spring, with the middle curve around Pt 7416 The picquets were sited on the spur which branched off from this ridge at Pt 5052 West of the Betar *Nala*, there was a main ridge which rose in successive peaks—Pt 4024, Pt.5724, Pt 6455 and Pt. 7819 The picquets were sited on the spur which branched off from Pt 5724 and forked into two. All these picquets were mortared and attacked during 16–18 December. The attacks were repulsed mainly with the support of the mountain guns which took a heavy toll of the enemy Then the attacks gradually petered out The Punch Brigade had weathered the storm.

OPERATIONS IN CHHAMB AND AKHNUR AREA

268 Brigade in Jammu area, engaged in guarding the lines of communication, was faced with considerable difficulties Between Akhnur and Bhimbar, the raiders were making a strong drive to clear the area of Hindus Several thousand refugees were pouring into Akhnur and Jammu. Villages in the Dewa-Batala area were burnt, the State Force garrison at Munawwar was withdrawn On 2 December, 45,000 refugees passed the bridge over the river Chenab from Akhnur side to Jammu 1 Patiala was ordered to sweep the area west of Akhnur One company 3 Madras and one company of the State troops as well as a troop of armoured cars of 7 Light Cavalry and a section medium machine guns (Mahars) located at Jaurian, joined in the sweep 7 Mountain Battery supported them

Between 4 and 7 December 1947, the villages of Gura Jagir, Garh, Kalit, Kalian and Palanwala were captured, and the whole area was cleaned up Operations could then be directed against Chhamb The capture of Chhamb was typical of the small but hard fought engagements witnessed during this period, and may be described in detail as an illustrative sample Before describing the operations which led to the capture of Chhamb it is necessary to understand the disposition of the Indian troops in Jammu area 268 Infantry Brigade was responsible for the protection of the lines of communication 1 Madras protected the road Jammu-Kathua 2 Jat had wide commitments—one company was at Ramban and Banihal Pass (on line of communication Jammu-Srinagar), a second at Ranbirsinghpura (on road leading from Jammu to Sialkot) and a

third at Chauki Chaura and Tanda Pass (on line of communication Jammu-Beri Pattan). 1 Patiala was at Palanwala, poised for the attack on the strong enemy position at Chhamb. 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles (temporarily under command 268 Brigade) was at Akhnur, with one company guarding the Chenab bridge

The estimated strength of the raiders in Akhnur-Chhamb area was 2000 to 3000 They were well equipped with light and medium machine guns.

On 9 December, the commander 268 Infantry Brigade ordered Lieut-Colonel B D Singh Gill, DSO, CO of 1 Patiala, to carry out the following tasks

(a) To establish bridge-head across river Munawwarwali Tawi covering village Chhamb

(b) To carry out offensive patrolling in area Chakla-Dewa, thence *Nala* running due south to Moel-Khairowal

The bridge-head was to be established by 11 December.

The following troops were under command 1 Patiala for this operation

One company Jammu & Kashmir State Force
(operating in that area)
One troop armoured cars (7 Cavalry)
One troop 30 Field Battery
One platoon 1 Mahar (MMG)
Detachment 29 Field Ambulance
Detachment 83 Workshop Company (Recovery)

Reconnaissance of the Chhamb area disclosed enemy dispositions from Mandiala to Munawwar along the western bank of the river Munawwarwali Tawi The enemy was well aware that this stretch was the most suitable for Indian troops to get across for Dewa-Batala-Bhimbar area The ground beyond the river crossing was dominated by Chhamb position, and only ten days ago a company of 1 Madras, with a troop of armoured cars and a section of medium machine guns, had suffered casualties and had to abandon the crossing The enemy had had ten days to improve his positions, and he was convinced that 1 Patiala would attempt a straight crossing The road-river crossing at Chhamb was systematically and cleverly mined and the approach to the river was well covered by the enemy

Instead of crossing directly, the commander of 1 Patiala planned to cross the river north-west of Chapreal, 5 km upstream from Chhamb C and D companies were to cross the river to area Pt 892 A platoon of mortars and a section of medium machine guns were to support the crossing from the eastern bank A company in area Samuan-Chapreal was to provide the right flank protection Two platoons 1 Patiala, a troop of armoured cars and a section of medium machine guns were to increase their activities on a wide front opposite Chhamb to deceive the enemy into the belief that they would attempt a straight crossing

D company had in the meantime got heavily involved from positions some 180 metres north-east of the village, covering road-river crossing at Chhamb Here the commander of one section of the left forward platoon was pinned down from high ground 45 metres from his section He got up and charged the position After throwing a grenade, he rushed forward and bayoneted one survivor in the post The whole company had to fight its way through a ring of snipers on the eastern edge of the village before it got to the southern corner of the village.

The enemy, though literally surrounded, stubbornly resisted further advance and fired frantically from its posts A group of snipers particularly gave a lot of trouble, they held up one platoon of D company from about 90 metres One sepoy shot down three snipers, thus enabling the platoon to make a charge at the enemy post Just at this time, one armoured car (the other having been blown up) joined the struggle The platoon charge was successful, the whole lot of defenders being killed, except three badly wounded men Chhamb was captured at 1530 hours by the two forward companies. Throughout the day a high degree of cooperation was displayed by armoured cars, a troop of field guns and platoon of medium machine guns Their timely support greatly assisted the operation Enemy suffered heavy casualties—37 dead bodies were counted. Many hostiles, however, escaped towards Munawwar Three prisoners, 21 rifles and a large quantity of ammunition were captured Prisoners stated that 300 armed men were in area Mandiala-Chhamb at the time of the attack Indian casualties were one wounded, one armoured car and one 3 tonner blown up

On 12 December 1 Patiala came under command 80 Brigade Group, which became responsible for the sector Akhnur-Chhamb Headquarters 80 Brigade arrived in Jammu on 13 December and moved to Akhnur on 14 December 1/9 Gorkha Rifles, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles and 4 Rajput were under command of the brigade 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles, however, soon moved to Srinagar The task of 80 Brigade Group was to consolidate the position at Chhamb and to engage in limited mopping up operations in that area

From 14 December to 17 December, the hostiles staged minor attacks every day, but were always beaten back without any trouble In the frequent patrol clashes, men of 1 Patiala gave a good account of themselves

On 18 December, 4 Rajput moved to Chhamb to relieve 1 Patiala 1 Patiala less two companies moved to Akhnur A and B companies 1 Patiala and one section 3-inch mortars remained under command 4 Rajput at Chhamb for the capture of Munawwar on 19 December Enemy in Munawwar withdrew to Pakistan territory on approach of the Indian troops Next day A and B companies 1 Patiala and section of 3-inch mortars moved to rejoin the battalion at Akhnur 4 Rajput remained at Chhamb

[illegible]

[illegible] under heavy [illegible] fire [illegible]. The Lance Naik rushed [illegible], threw a few [illegible] out of the truck and jumped down to the ground. [illegible] convey the ammunition to the [illegible]. He [illegible],

broke the boxes and started throwing bandoliers at the men. Though he was wounded, he carried on till every man who needed ammunition was supplied with it.

As the forward platoon was being subjected to heavy fire, it was necessary to help it to get back to a more favourable position. Therefore at about midday another platoon was ordered to go up a spur on the left of the forward platoon. Effective light machine gun fire was brought down on the hill from which the enemy was firing, thus enabling the forward platoon to change its position. There was only one small field where a 3-inch mortar could be put in position, but it was under enemy fire from a hill. A Naik risked his life to put the mortar in position in the field. One bullet went through the ammunition and two more hit the barrel. Undaunted, the Naik fired bomb after bomb till the enemy started running from that hill.

While this fighting had been going on, Tactical Headquarters at Chauki had received at about 1115 hours a SOS for reinforcement. A Lieutenant of 3 Platoon Para Supplies of 50 Para Brigade, who happened to be at Chauki on his way to Naushahra, volunteered to assist A company and fight his way out to Beri Pattan. At 1230 hours he was sent up along with a platoon formed out of Headquarters and administrative personnel. The relief column reached the scene of action at 1600 hours. At 1830 hours on 20 December, the commanding officer of 2 Jat came with a company of 1/9 Gorkha Rifles. The enemy withdrew and the wounded were safely evacuated by about 2000 hours on 20 December. The enemy casualties were approximately 40 killed and 73 wounded. Indian casualties were 7 killed and 14 wounded. In addition, 1 civilian guide was killed and 6 were wounded. Another company of 1/9 Gorkha Rifles arrived at about 1300 hours on 21 December. Patrolling the next day showed that the hostiles had fled from the area.

THE ADVANCE TOWARDS CHINGAS

Meanwhile, 50 Para Brigade was busy consolidating its position at Naushahra. Brigadier Usman, the new commander 50 Para Bde, turned his attention to clearing the enemy from the Kot feature and capturing Chingas on the road to Rajauri. On 14 December, 1 Rajput (less one company) attacked Kot. The forward company encountered heavy automatic fire from well dug-in enemy positions and was compelled to withdraw to Naushahra. On 16 December, 50 Para Brigade sent a column from Naushahra to capture Chingas, while a feint attack on Kot was staged at 1000 hours. The Chingas column was heavily engaged and held up at Ambli Dhar feature. On the same day the enemy made repeated attempts to capture Tain Dhar feature north of Naushahra. Heavy automatic fire was directed on the picquet and several attempts were made to rush it. The attack was, however, repulsed.

On 17 December, the Chingas column continued its advance Overcoming heavy enemy fire, estimated to be from two Bren guns and about sixty rifles, on 18 December the column moved towards Kamila on a two company front Kamila was reached at 2200 hours Next day, B and C, the two forward companies, swept in the north-easterly direction and captured Pt 4622 No further advance was made and the companies withdrew to camp at Kamila because of insufficient strength in the camp picquet On 20 December the column returned to Naushahra, reaching that place at 1500 hours and bringing back nine abducted women and eight Hindus Chingas was reported to be deserted

JHANGAR FALLS

Although the hostiles kept up pressure at Uri and Punch and also attempted to cut off the vulnerable Indian line of communication, it was against Jhangar that their main effort was directed Jhangar was of strategic importance since it was the junction of the roads from Mirpur and Kotli By capturing Jhangar, the Indian troops had cut off the enemy's line of communication from Mirpur to Kotli and Punch The hostiles were determined to retake Jhangar

After the evacuation of Kotli at the close of November 1947, 50 Para Brigade concentrated at Naushahra, 1/2 Punjab was however left at Jhangar with the following under command.

One troop A squadron 7 Cavalry (4 armoured cars)
One platoon Y Company 1 Mahar (MMG) (4 medium machine guns)
Detachment 14 Field Company Engineers
One company 33 Field Ambulance
Detachment 50 Para Brigade Signal Section
50 Para Brigade Light Aid Detachment

The commander of 1/2 Punjab took steps to site picquets to command the approaches to Jhangar from Mirpur and Kotli The holding of Pir Matalsi ridge was of the utmost importance to meet the enemy threat from Mirpur Hence one company with two medium machine guns and a detachment of mortars was positioned there Another company was put on its flank at a lower height, but on the same line of ridges which stretched towards Naushahra The remaining two companies were scattered all round on picquets which numbered about ten Most of these picquets were on the ridge which commanded the approaches to Jhangar from Kotli Unfortunately the ground did not afford opportunities for these picquets to be inter-supporting The distance between them varied from 450 metres to 720 metres The defence was in the shape of a basin with the cross roads in the centre Armoured cars were used mostly for road opening operations, and from the road itself they could hardly support any defensive positions

From the beginning of December 1947, enemy increased the pressure on Jhangar Picquets were kept engaged continuously On 9 December, the raiders launched a powerful attack on the Pir Matalsi

ridge They came in superior numbers and managed to come as near as 45 metres of the Indian positions The attack was, however, repulsed and the enemy retired, leaving 40 dead behind Further attacks appeared likely, but unfortunately, no early reinforcements were possible

On the day (16 December) that the Indian column advanced from Naushahra towards Chingas, the enemy stopped and engaged a convoy from Jhangar to Naushahra at a roadblock at milestone 12 On 19 December, the enemy was successful in disrupting temporarily the line of communication A convoy of 25 vehicles proceeding from Naushahra towards Akhnur was held up at 1430 hours at a spot, where a bridge had been destroyed and the road had been blocked The convoy was attacked by about 300 enemy with rifles and automatics The last vehicle of the column turned back to Beri Pattan and reported the incident A platoon of 3 (Para) Rajput from Beri Pattan arrived at 1530 hours when fighting was still going on. The column was extricated and brought back. Indian casualties were 1 officer and 16 Other Ranks missing On the same day at 2100 hours, the picquets of 1/2 Punjab at Jhangar were heavily mortared and simultaneously attacked The attack lasted till 0330 hours on 20 December, when it was finally repulsed

The next enemy attack on Jhangar on 24 December was well planned. His coordination and timings for this particular plan were very near perfect For a week before his attack the enemy kept on sending small parties at night to feel the defences After these preliminary operations, enemy cut off the line of communication and then launched an attack on Jhangar Thus prior to his attack on Jhangar the enemy succeeded in putting strong roadblocks on roads Jhangar-Naushahra and Beri Pattan-Chauki On the morning of 23 December, a troop of armoured cars (No 2) escorting a convoy carrying rations and ammunition and one company 1 Rajput from Naushahra to Jhangar encountered one such roadblock 6 km west of Naushahra, and came under very heavy fire from ridges north and south of the road at 1000 hours Another troop of armoured cars (No 1) proceeding from Jhangar towards Naushahra also encountered a similar roadblock at about the same time Both the columns got involved in very heavy fighting Enemy strength in this area was approximately 1500 men armed with mortars, light machine guns, rifles and hand grenades They succeeded in working their way to the rear of both the columns and blew up the two bridges in the rear of each column, thus cutting off their way of retreat Now there were four roadblocks, which kept the two troops of armoured cars approximately 900 metres apart Infantry did not support the armoured cars but went down the *Nala*. At 1600 hours, 1 Rajput less one company, which had been assigned the task of protecting the left flank of the convoy from area Kaman Gosha Gala, returned to Naushahra and at once proceeded to help the hard pressed convoy. They also got involved in the fighting and were not successful in bringing back the armoured cars due to broken culverts, though they

extricated their own company by 1800 hours The company commander was wounded, 3 Indian Other Ranks were killed and 3 were missing Meanwhile the armoured cars were still locked up in battle with the enemy on the roadblocks The crews of all the four armoured cars fought all day and night. Troop leader Jemadar Umrao Singh (No 2 troop) fought very bravely and killed at least 200 enemy The armoured cars repulsed half-a-dozen determined attacks by the enemy during the night 23/24 December, although enemy anti-tank rifles damaged the armoured cars to a considerable extent.

Having been successful in blocking the road Naushahra-Jhangar and preventing reinforcements, enemy attacked Jhangar in great strength in the morning of 24 December. The first attack came in from the south-west at 0630 hours and was carried out with great determination by a force of 2000. The weak company holding the position on the Pir Matalsi ridge, unprotected by barbed wire, was over-run by the large number of attackers, in spite of scores of them falling down due to fire from the valiant defenders They came in wave after wave with complete disregard to casualties The machine gunners worked havoc, but they were cut to pieces while still firing the guns It was estimated that enemy suffered nearly 1000 casualties, but within an hour he had seized the Pir Matalsi ridge The company in flank being at a dominated place, could not last long By daylight the whole of the ridge was in enemy hands The enemy put in a second attack from the north-west with an approximate strength of 1000 at 0730 hours With the vital Pir Matalsi ridge in enemy hands, the remnants of the other two companies were put on the small local features on the cross roads, but they could not do much to stem the rot Jhangar was now completely surrounded and inter-communication between Jhangar and Naushahra was disrupted at 0740 hours Mortar ammunition was by then exhausted The enemy had occupied the intermediate features between the cross roads and the Pir Matalsi ridge The commander of the garrison was faced with two alternatives—either to hold on and get completely annihilated or to withdraw to Naushahra He decided on the latter alternative All available transport which could be loaded was sent back but this was lost on the roadblocks The remnant of the garrison began to trickle to Naushahra in small parties

Meanwhile the armoured cars at the roadblocks on the road Naushahra-Jhangar had recommenced their battle against the hostiles at 0700 hours on 24 December Troops had very nearly expended all their ammunition No 1 troop (ex Jhangar) however managed to come past the abandoned convoy and joined up with No 2 troop It came further towards Naushahra when, immediately after passing over a bridge, the wheel of the front armoured car slipped off the road The second armoured car trying to pull this one out also got ditched The crews had to abandon the armoured cars at 1200 hours and arrived at Naushahra by approximately 1400 hours The troop leaders made an attempt to

recover the armoured cars with the help of a breakdown lorry, but were unsuccessful Guns from the two armoured cars were, however, removed The recovery party returned to Naushahra at 1800 hours.

While all these events were taking place, an attempt was made to send a relief column from Naushahra to Jhangar A column of 1 Rajput less one company, a section of mountain artillery and a section of medium machine guns left Naushahra at 0700 hours on 24 December. In order to avoid the enemy on the road, the column took a route south of the road but its advance was held up 3 km south-west of Naushahra by approximately 3000 hostiles, occupying strong positions at Nothi Dhar and surrounding features A savage battle was fought the whole day to get through, but owing to the enemy's advantageous position on commanding features, the column was eventually pinned to the ground By 1400 hours, the remnants of the Jhangar garrison, who were being followed by the enemy from Jhangar, were arriving on the scene and with the help of the relief column managed to fight their way to Naushahra On approach of darkness the reinforcement column also broke off engagement and fell back on Naushahra

The hostiles followed up their success at Jhangar by an attack on Naushahra at 1800 hours on 25 December About 3000 raiders were concentrated all round the camp. Parties of the enemy also by-passed Naushahra and proceeded towards Beri Pattan to cut off the line of communication The camp was heavily mortared The enemy made two attempts to infiltrate into the camp at 1900 hours and 2100 hours on 25 December. Both the attempts were foiled Several enemy attempts to rush the picquets were also repulsed The enemy broke off engagement on approach of daylight and concentrated in Nothi Dhar and Shan Da Mohra features in the south-west and Kot, north-east of Naushahra. Their strength in the immediate vicinity of line of communication Naushahra-Beri Pattan was estimated to be between 2500-3000 and approximately 5000 in area between Naushahra and Jhangar

Offensive air support was not possible on 24 December due to bad weather, as a result of which the Tempests at Jammu were grounded Offensive air support was given on 25 December, from Jammu Ammunition dumps and enemy concentrations were fiercely strafed and bombed, which undoubtedly blunted the edge of further attacks

The loss of Jhangar was a serious setback Indian casualties in men and material were heavy Two officers and 58 Other Ranks were killed, three officers, two Junior Commissioned Officers and 51 Other Ranks were wounded, and 42 Other Ranks were reported missing Equipment lost in action included five 3-inch mortars, four medium machine guns, fourteen light machine guns, twelve 2-inch mortars, seventy rifles, four armoured cars and a number of other vehicles The tragic story of the loss of Jhangar is, however, illuminated by the reckless heroism of a handful of machine gunners (a platoon of 1 Mahar) who stuck to their

posts and continued to fire and take heavy toll of the enemy until they were overwhelmed and cut to pieces

PLANNING AGAIN

The setback at Jhanger led to a review of the situation and some important administrative changes In order to appreciate the situation, it is necessary to bear in mind the relative strengths of the rival forces The Indian forces comprised one division of four brigades Headquarters Jammu and Kashmir Division was at Jammu, 80 Brigade at Akhnur, 50 Para Brigade at Naushahra, Punch Brigade at Punch and 161 Brigade at Uri The enemy was vastly superior in numbers now In the Uri sector, enemy numbers had swollen to 13,000 with about 6000 in Muzaffarabad area About 1000 raiders were in the Punch sector In the Naushahra area, the estimated enemy strength was 10,000 while 5,000 raiders were estimated to be in Jammu sector About 500 raiders were believed to be in Akhnur sector

Immediately after the fall of Jhangar, Major-General Kalwant Singh made an appreciation of the situation He had then at his disposal 15 Indian infantry battalions and 2 State Force battalions, a machine gun battalion, an armoured car regiment, one field regiment (2 batteries) and a mountain regiment (4 batteries). The average strength of his brigade groups, with the exception of 161 Brigade, was approximately 2000 The enemy was superior in strength especially in Uri and Naushahra sectors On account of the good road, leading from Mansehra to Muzaffarabad, the enemy could build up his forces against Uri, but as that position was strong it was capable of holding up an advance from Domel The Punch garrison was weak, and unless reinforced immediately, could not hold on for long against a major attack The Naushahra garrison had suffered heavy casualties and required immediate reinforcements Beri Pattan was weakly defended and needed strengthening In order to stop enemy concentrations in the Southern sector, it would be essential to recapture Bhimbar and Mirpur as early as possible Immediate air action to destroy the bridges at Domel, Kohala and Lachman Pattan and engaging enemy concentrations at Domel, Mirpur and Jhangar would be required

Four possible courses were open to the enemy (i) to try and dislodge the Indian troops from Uri, or to cut road Uri-Baramula and lay a siege to Uri, (ii) to capture Punch, (iii) to by-pass Naushahra, capture Beri Pattan and then invest Naushahra with a view to capturing it, (iv) to attack Jammu Out of these possible courses, the enemy was likely to cut road Uri-Baramula and lay a siege to Uri, as he knew that there were not many Indian troops between Baramula and Uri. He also realised the importance of capturing Beri Pattan to cut off Naushahra

In view of these possible developments, Major-General Kalwant Singh's intention was to hold on to the firm bases, patrol extensively from them and give the enemy a knock-out blow as quickly as possible

in the Naushahra sector His plan in outline was as follows:

(i) To reinforce Uri sector with one battalion immediately, patrol extensively and dominate the line of communication
(ii) To reinforce the Punch garrison with one battalion immediately and to evacuate by air immediately all civilian women and children
(iii) To secure line of communication Jammu-Naushahra, hold Beri Pattan and Naushahra at all costs and organise a brigade group for the recapture of Jhangar at the earliest opportunity
(iv) To hold at all costs the bridge over the river Chenab at Akhnur and to build up forces at Chhamb with a view to capturing Bhimbar
(v) To hold Jammu at all costs
(vi) After Jhangar and Bhimbar had been secured, to recapture Mirpur
(vii) After Bhimbar and Mirpur had been recaptured to relieve Punch

Major-General Kalwant Singh's appreciation was taken due note of at the Army Headquarters at New Delhi General Lockhart's appreciation was that the enemy would make increasingly strenuous efforts—

(i) to prevent Indian forces securing Punch or Mirpur,
(ii) to drive back the Indian forces from their advanced positions in Uri, Punch town and Naushahra,
(iii) to capture Srinagar.

It would seek to attain these objects by harassing the posts and detachments, raiding the line of communication and villages and towns in different places to create panic Raids would be made, sometimes at one end of the front, sometimes at the other, sometimes in the middle It would, therefore, be unwise to concentrate Indian troops on one portion of the front to meet a specific threat and leave other portions lightly held

Although the enemy possessed mobility, and in places the support of the local population, he also had his difficulties, e g , lack of aircraft, lack of supporting arms, and in Punch the handicap of snow hindering movement

Forces in the Uri sector were not strong enough to undertake an advance towards Domel and at the same time to ensure the defence of Uri and to prevent the line of communication being cut Task in Uri would, therefore, be to consolidate the position, prevent tribal infiltration on to the line of communication and take offensive action on a limited scale when suitable opportunities occurred Punch town would be held at all costs, and early steps taken to recapture Jhangar and to open the line of communication Jhangar-Kotli-Punch in order to maintain the garrison in Punch A threat would be developed from Chhamb to Bhimbar The security of Jammu town would be ensured It was necessary that Indian forces should retain the initiative, and having

due regard to the principle of security, act vigorously at all times and inflict the heaviest casualties possible on the invaders

The air element acting in support of Jammu & Kashmir Division comprised eight Tempests, seven Harvards, and two Dakotas at Jammu, plus six Tempests at call from Delhi when weather conditions rendered the Jammu airfield unserviceable These were adequate to support the ground forces in the execution of the tasks In addition, transport aircraft were available for maintenance by air up to a maximum of six sorties a day on a short haul

The urgent problem of reinforcing Jammu and Kashmir Division was considered at the Chiefs of Staff Conference held on 27 December It was agreed to strengthen Jammu and Kashmir Division with an additional brigade (i e Brigade HQ, three infantry battalions, one squadron armoured cars and one field company, RIE) Of the three infantry battalions, two were earmarked by Delhi-East Punjab Command as follows

(i) 1st Battalion the Indian Grenadiers (then with 5 Brigade at Ludhiana)—for Uri
(ii) Either 2 (Para) Madras or 3/9 Gorkha Rifles (with Delhi Area)—to reinforce Punch garrison

The third battalion was to be detailed by Army Headquarters from outside Delhi-East Punjab Command for Srinagar The Conference also took into consideration the maintenance problem These reinforcements would put a heavy strain on the supply system which was already far from satisfactory and had not reached target figures owing to bad weather and continued increase in strengths The Banihal Pass was snow-bound and the airstrip at Srinagar temporarily unserviceable. Punch was entirely dependent on air supply. Two Royal Indian Air Force Dakotas only were then available at Jammu for the supply lift This number was completely inadequate, and unless supplemented immediately, a very difficult and probably dangerous situation might arise Lieut-General Russell, therefore, suggested that 15 Dakotas might be purchased by the Royal Indian Air Force at once They should be modified for supply dropping immediately and placed in support of Delhi-East Punjab Command Further, in view of the increased commitments, the existing arrangements for carrying supplies and stores to Jammu by civil aircraft would have to be continued

Lieut-General Russell made two other suggestions Firstly, as the Indian troops in Kashmir were then considerably more than an Infantry Division, it would be desirable to change the name of this force from Jammu and Kashmir Division to Jammu and Kashmir Force Secondly, it would be necessary to establish a satisfactory line of communication organisation for Jammu & Kashmir Force

Another consequence of the loss of Jhangar was to stress the importance of the raising of irregular forces As more and more troops

poured into Kashmir to meet the mounting enemy threat, Army Headquarters realised the necessity of raising irregular forces to supplement the work of the regular forces Immediately after the loss of Jhangar, it was decided to raise such forces Major-General Thimayya, Commander East Punjab Area, was ordered to raise six Frontier Constabulary battalions from East Punjab, three of which were to be raised immediately He was also to raise an irregular force, 10,000 strong, part of which would be placed at the disposal of Major-General Kalwant Singh, if required. A force of 10,000 irregulars was to be raised in Jammu and Kashmir from ex-servicemen The ruler of Patiala was also to raise another infantry battalion

The events leading to the loss of Jhangar showed unmistakably that the intelligence organisation was faulty The Prime Minister in a letter to General Lockhart suggested that information could only be obtained by co-operating with Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad's men Up-to-date and accurate intelligence was vital to the success of the operations in Kashmir The intelligence staff authorised for Jammu and Kashmir Division was insufficient to deal efficiently with this task Hence Lieut-General Russell prepared a scheme for the establishment of an Intelligence Bureau, whose tasks would be to establish a prisoners cage at Jammu and conduct interrogation and final disposal, to collate information from civil sources, and to arrange liaison visits to units The Bureau would be under Delhi-East Punjab Command and would work in close liaison with Jammu & Kashmir Division

The loss of Jhangar also emphasised the necessity of a satisfactory line of communication organisation Originally, troops were flown into Kashmir State at short notice Since then there had been considerable reinforcements No detailed planning was possible before the operations commenced, and none had been possible since then Decisions made had been political rather than military, consequently the military plan had had to be adjusted, at very short notice, to meet these political considerations As a result, the administration of Jammu and Kashmir Division had been built up day by day, as the changing situation demanded, and not in accordance with a carefully considered initial administrative appreciation No staff for administrative installations had been forthcoming, because of shortage of suitably qualified and experienced officers

This state of affairs was obviously most unsatisfactory Hence on 29 December Lieut-General Russell recommended the setting up of a L of C organisation for the following special reasons

(i) The portion of the line of communication Pathankot-Jammu lay partly in East Punjab Area and partly in Jammu & Kashmir Division There was no controlling authority for this vital link as a whole This had led to misuse of transport—dispatch of unbalanced commodities and general lack of control

(ii) Commander Jammu & Kashmir Division, whose engineer and administrative responsibilities had then outgrown the capacity of his staff, had his attention considerably distracted from the main operations by the necessity of watching the line of communication Jammu-Pathankot

(iii) It was vital to the success of the operations that really efficient communications between Pathankot and Kashmir be established without delay This was only possible if a L of C organisation was positioned at once

(iv) The bad roads in Kashmir called for a systematic, rapid and methodical build up, so that the forces in the State were satisfactorily maintained

As a result of this recommendation, Army Headquarters sanctioned a L of C Sub Area for Pathankot The intention was to organise Pathankot into an Advance Base A second-in-command for Jammu & Kashmir Force was also sanctioned and posted An administrative commandant was authorised for Srinagar Long term planning provided for an Area Headquarters in Jammu and Sub Areas as necessary

Another vital problem was to stimulate the battalion and brigade commanders to be as offensive and imaginative in their operations as they could be When Brigadier J N Chaudhuri, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, visited Jammu on 15 January 1948 and had discussions with Major-General Kalwant Singh regarding the military situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he got the impression that though the morale of the men was fairly high, that of the officers was not so high The commanders were sometimes timid in their offensive patrolling, while some of them even forgot elementary principles of warfare For instance, in one case, picquets outside the camp were not stocked with reserve ammunition Brigadier Chaudhuri, in whose views Major-General Kalwant Singh concurred, suggested suitable gallantry awards (in place of commendation cards) to raise the morale of the officers

As a result of this detailed discussion, some of these defects were removed and the Indian Army in Kashmir turned to the task of driving out the raiders from Jammu and Kashmir with renewed energy

THE BALANCE-SHEET

The short period of two weeks—10 December to 26 December—was crowded with dramatic incidents Indian troops were the first to strike by driving out the enemy from Chhamb on 10 December and by developing a thrust towards Rajauri on 16 December The Royal Indian Air Force made a notable contribution by carrying supplies, artillery and ammunition to the garrison at Punch, thus enabling them to withstand the enemy assaults In the Uri sector, the enemy's skilful tactics lured 1 Sikh into an ambush, resulting in heavy losses The destruction of a convoy west of Sadhot on 19 December, followed by the ambush of 2 Jat at Sadhot, showed the successful guerilla tactics

adopted by the hostiles The creation of the roadblocks on road Naushahra-Jhangar on 23 December, followed by his successful attack on Jhangar on 24 December, showed the excellent planning and resourcefulness of the enemy Though the attack on Naushahra was repulsed on 26 December, the enemy had certainly regained the initiative and had struck telling blows, which had considerably raised his morale The enemy had the advantage of shorter lines of communication and well did he exploit it Yet these weeks were memorable also for the bravery and courage displayed by the Indian troops, especially on four occasions Who can ever forget the reckless courage of the Sikhs and the Jats while they were ambushed at Bhatgiran and Sadhot respectively? Again, who can ever forget the exploits of A squadron 7 Cavalry as they fought for over 24 hours with grim determination against tremendous odds on the road Naushahra-Jhangar? The heroism of the handful of Mahar machine gunners at Jhangar who continued to fire and to take a heavy toll of the enemy till they were cut to pieces at their posts was unexcelled in any army These exploits are a rich heritage and their memory will ever remain green.

Notes

1 One officer has commented that Coy 1/1 Punjab (Indian elements) had left for Jammu and was not there then
2 Notes on Kashmir Operations by Brig Harbakhsh Singh
3 The accounts of Brig L P Sen and Brig Harbakhsh Singh differ substantially
4 Notes on Kashmir Operations by Brig Harbakhsh Singh

CHAPTER VII

The Battle of Naushahra

(January-February 1948)

With the capture of Jhangar on 24 December, the raiders gained the considerable advantage of the unopposed use of the road Mirpur-Jhangar-Kotli-Punch. This gained them an advantageous position in building up their forces for attacks on Naushahra as well as Punch On the other hand, the loss of Jhangar was a major setback for the Indian forces, and their strategy was conditioned by the urgency of recapturing this vital strategic position The month of January passed in raids and counter-raids, which did not decide the issue, but were merely preliminary operations for the main trial of strength This took place on 6 February 1948, when the enemy launched an all-out attack on Naushahra, which was decisively repulsed The battle of Naushahra was a serious blow to the enemy and paved the way for the recapture of Jhangar on 18 March 1948

PRELIMINARY SKIRMISHES

Enemy defensive positions around Naushahra were tactically well dispersed to guard the vital L of C Naushahra-Jhangar His main defensive positions were in area Nothi Dhar, south of the road, Shan Da Mohra, north of the road, and the area of milestones 5 and 6 The chief forward defended localities were Nanial, Manpur, Bhajnoa, Dhindheka and Chauki There were also a number of strong posts dominating and threatening the Indian L of C Naushahra-Beri Pattan Enemy posts from Dabbar to Gugarot covered both ends of the road bottle-neck

North and north-west of Naushahra, the main enemy positions were at Ambli Dhar and Tain Dhar North-east of Naushahra, the main defensive position was at Kot with forward defended localities at Pathradi, Uparla Dandesar and Bagnoti South-west of Naushahra, the main defensive positions were at Kaman Gosha Gala and Sadabad The latter was a strategic place, since tracks led from Sadabad to Mirpur, Bhimbar, Beri Pattan and Jhangar The distances from Sadabad to Bhimbar, Beri Pattan, Naushahra and Jhangar were 18, 16, 16 and 29 km respectively

On 26 December 1947, when the enemy launched an attack on Naushahra, the Commander 80 Bde Gp despatched two companies 1/9 Gorkha Rifles to strengthen the Naushahra garrison, while the rest of the brigade group (henceforth called Z Brigade Group) concentrated about 8 km short of Naushahra by 3 January 1948 Z Brigade Group

consisted of.

Tac HQ Z Bde Gp
2 Bde Signal Section
2 Bde LAD
3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry
1/9 Gorkha Rifles less one company
1 Patiala less two companies
One platoon (MMG) 1 Mahar Regiment
Regimental Headquarters 16 Field Regiment
5 Mountain Battery
22 Field Company less one platoon
Two troops 8 Animal Transport Regiment
One platoon 640 Company RIASC
One company 29 Field Ambulance
Detachment Provost

Thus two brigade groups were ready to meet the enemy threat to Naushahra Z Brigade Group was established in area Chhaon and its role was to guard the line of communication, i e the roads leading from Naushahra to Jhangar and Beri Pattan The role of 50 Para Bde, constituting the garrison of Naushahra, was to probe into enemy defences and to repel enemy attacks on Naushahra

The week following the abortive enemy attack on Naushahra on 26 December 1947 was utilised by the Indian forces in consolidating their hold on Naushahra and in regaining the upper hand against the hostiles in the area. For this purpose, offensive patrols were sent out daily to probe the enemy positions all round These patrols never allowed themselves to get locked in serious combat with the vastly superior numbers of the enemy, but always broke off and withdrew after feeling out the enemy positions and inflicting casualties But on 7 January 1948, the Rajputs captured a hill feature about 2 km west of the main Indian camp and established a permanent picquet there The next day, Tain Dhar was cleared, and the enemy pushed back to Ambli Dhar

While the Indian troops were probing into enemy defences, the enemy was also busy exploiting his success at Jhangar to launch attacks on Naushahra and to cut the Naushahra-Beri Pattan road. On the evening of 4 January 1948, the raiders launched an attack on Naushahra from the south-west The attack was repulsed by artillery and mortar fire At 1000 hours on 6 January, large numbers of raiders attacked Naushahra camp from the north-west These two attacks from the north-west and the south-west were probably feints, as later, at 1600 hours on 6 January, the main attack developed from the north-east The defensive camp was sniped from close range, and about twenty shells fell in the area of workshops and near Brigade Headquarters Armoured cars manning the defences on the western side of the perimeter got near hits Armoured cars of A squadron 7 Cav supported the infantry in repelling the raiders, who had come close to the camp The Air Force also went into action and carried out excellent strafing

The attack was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy, 500 dead bodies littered the battlefield

STRUGGLE FOR THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION

Enemy not only attacked Naushahra but also cut the L of C Naushahra-Beri Pattan On 5 January a column of 3 ton lorries and jeeps was held up by a roadblock about 8 km from Naushahra Enemy snipers were active, but armoured cars gave covering fire and extricated the column On the same day another troop of armoured cars coming from Beri Pattan towards Naushahra with another column, was also held up by a roadblock near Seri The engagement lasted from 1100 hours to 1900 hours The column was extricated and the troop of armoured cars returned to Beri Pattan But the threat was clear

Brigadier Usman, Commander 50 Para Bde, decided to send a strong column to open the road Naushahra-Beri Pattan, and to remove the roadblocks This operation started at 0730 hours on 6 January 1 Rajput, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles, 3 (Para) Rajput and 7 Mountain Battery took part in the operations As the column moved out of the camp, it was sniped heavily and met strong opposition about 3 km from Naushahra When the forward troops arrived at milestone 51 a message was received from the Brigade Commander to withdraw immediately, as the threat to the Naushahra camp was increasing by that time The column returned to camp at 1030 hours and helped in repelling the enemy attack on Naushahra Meanwhile the enemy increased his force from about 300 to 1500 and put up more roadblocks to cut the vital Naushahra-Beri Pattan road On 7 January enemy put up three road-blocks between milestones 46–48 (near Seri) by blowing bridges These roadblocks were well sited and covered with fire

On 7 January, Brigadier Usman issued instructions for the opening of L of C Naushahra-Beri Pattan The following additional troops were placed under command 50 Para Bde for this operation

3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry
1/9 Gorkha Rifles less detachments
1 Patiala less detachments
Detachment 22 Field Company RIE

The road Naushahra-Beri Pattan was to be opened by two columns, one operating from Naushahra upto and including Seri, and another operating from Beri Pattan to and excluding Seri.

Soon after the advance commenced from Naushahra on 8 January, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles, leading the column, encountered opposition about 2 km from the camp They overcame the opposition and established a picquet at Kangota by 1205 hours Meanwhile 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry and 1 Patiala had pushed on to clear the road The former met opposition, but established a picquet at Pt 3052 and another picquet at Pt 2786 1 Patiala cleared the blocks and opened the road up to Seri by

1425 hours. The platoon picquet of 1 Patiala at Seri was heavily fired at from Ding at 1430 hours, but the enemy was dispersed by 3-inch mortar and gun fire 1 Patiala contacted the other column from Beri Pattan just east of Seri at 1700 hours The convoy could not pass that day because the bridge could not be repaired And so the withdrawal commenced at 1715 hours Then trouble started The Mahratta picquet at Pt 2786 having been withdrawn, the enemy seized the opportunity to launch fierce attacks The column (1 Patiala and attached troops) was heavily engaged between milestones 45 and 48 But all the attacks were beaten off and the troops reached camp at 2202 hours The armoured cars formed the rear-guard and assisted the withdrawal of the various picquets.

On 9 January 1948 Brigadier Lakhinder Singh, MBE, Commander 'Z' Brigade Group, issued instructions for opening road Naushahra—excluding Seri The following troops were under command for the operation:

3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry
1/9 Gorkha Rifles less detachments
1 Patiala less detachments
A squadron 7 Cavalry
Platoon 1 Mahar MMG (2 sections)
22 Field Company RIE plus detachment 14 Field Coy RIE
Detachment 29 Field Ambulance

Surprisingly, the road was cleared on 10 January without meeting any opposition. All the bridges were repaired and diversions were made at a few places. The convoys from both sides successfully passed through Then the columns returned to camp. The enemy bid to cut the L of C had failed

After the failure of his attack on Naushahra on 6 January and his failure to keep the vital road Naushahra-Beri Pattan closed to traffic, the enemy confined his activities to sniping and light patrolling, while carrying out the re-organisation of his forces for another major trial of strength. Indian forces too reorganised and confined their activities to light patrolling as a prelude to an attack on the strong enemy defensive position at Kot on 1 February.

On 15 January, Z Brigade less 1/9 Gorkha Rifles, 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry and 22 Field Company RIE pulled out of Naushahra, as the imminent threat to Naushahra had been removed On 17 January a patrol to Pathradi met heavy opposition from about 400 enemy. Another patrol to Kaman Gosha Gala on the same day was engaged by 300 enemy. On 18 January the hostiles heavily shelled the Indian picquets around Naushahra. On 19 January, a patrol, supported by armoured cars, on the road Naushahra-Chingas, was mortared and heavily sniped at by the hostiles from area [illegible] of Pathradi

On 21 January 1948, one company fr[illegible]) Mahratta Light Infantry tried to clear enemy from Pt. 221[illegible]any with a [illegible]

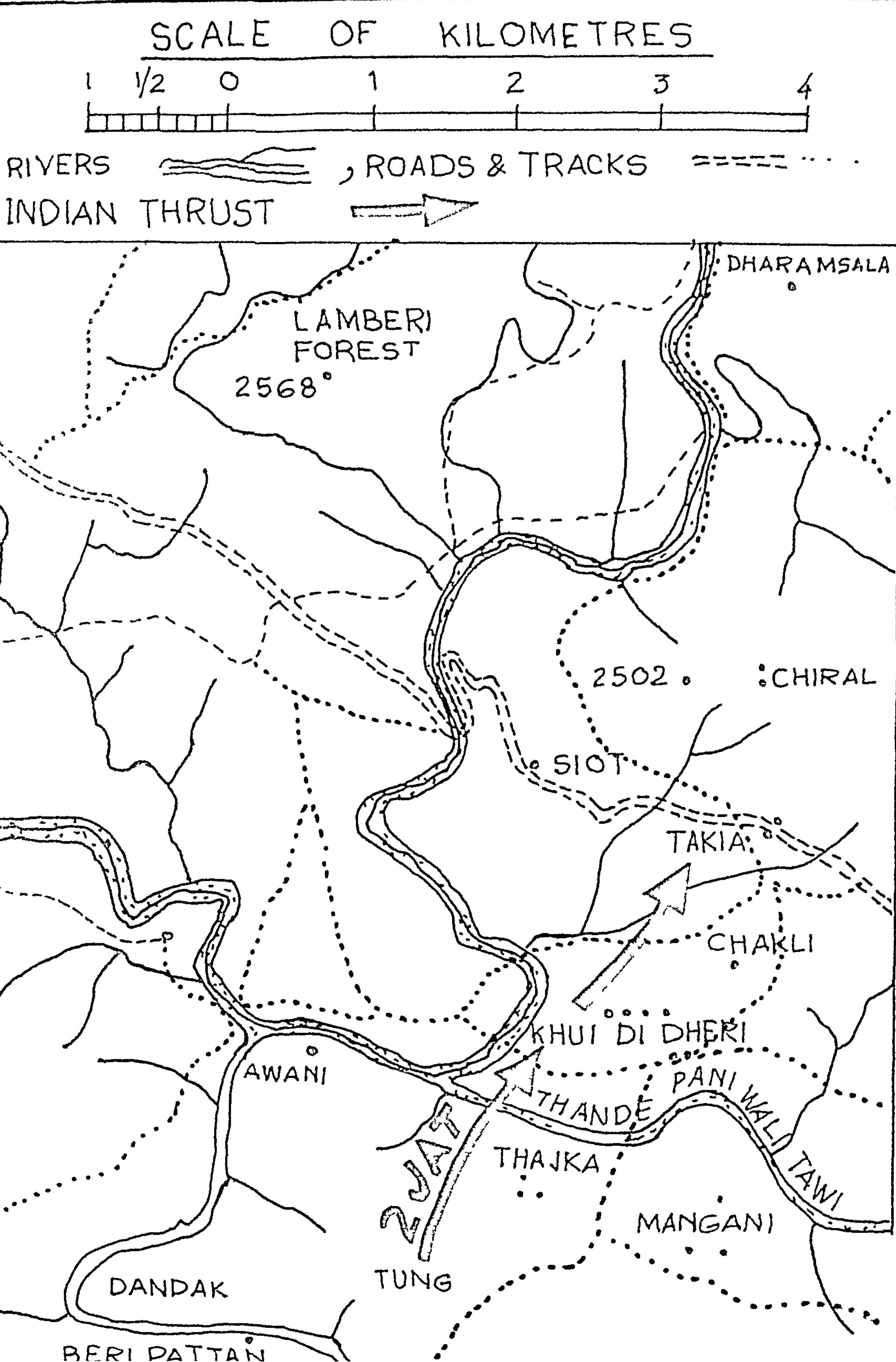
of mortars and Forward Observation Officer advanced on its objective at 0800 hours At about 1230 hours, as the company came within 180 metres of the objective, the enemy opened up with two 3-inch mortars, medium machine gun and small arms fire The hostiles were in well prepared positions and no advance or withdrawal was possible on the comparatively low ground. The Mahrattas lost 2 killed and 3 wounded. The evacuation of these casualties was possible only after B and C companies with Tactical Headquarters and a section of medium machine gun arrived at about 1800 hours Withdrawal and evacuation of casualties was then effected under cover of darkness at about 1900 hours

'SATYANAS' AND 'CHEETA'

Brigadier Usman did not confine patrolling activities to Naushahra area but also tried to probe into enemy positions in the Beri Pattan area He ordered Lt-Col R G Naidu, Commander 2 Jat, to carry out operation 'Satyanas' for clearing the enemy from the area around Beri Pattan Accordingly, B company of 2 Jat supported by a detachment of 3-inch mortars patrolled towards Siot on 22 January, and encountered strong enemy opposition from Chakli and Takia The enemy, estimated to be 300 strong, was well dug in and armed with medium machine guns and light machine guns There was also a strong enemy defensive position at Dharamsal Owing to the difficult nature of the country ahead, and the large area held by the enemy, Lt-Col Naidu decided on a forty-eight hour operation His plan was to march out of the camp into the hills up north and lie in ambush for the night, then cross the Thandapaniwali Tawi and attack at dawn the enemy position at Siot.

The Jats occupied Tung unseen by the enemy on 23 January and lay in ambush in the hope of getting some prisoners On the morning of 24 January, they crossed the Thandapaniwali Tawi. No raider was encountered In the early hours of 25 January, as C company advanced to attack Siot and Pt 2502 the enemy from Chiral opened fire. Like switching the street lights on, the whole range of hills occupied by the enemy came to life and firing gained in intensity every minute While C company was pinned down by heavy fire, enemy on the ridge managed to come down the *Nala* and started firing at Battalion Headquarters at Takia from a distance of about 270 to 360 metres At the same time the Battalion Headquarters was subjected to fire from the west also by the enemy occupying the ridge Col Naidu, therefore, ordered the Battalion Headquarters and the Gunner Observation Post to fall back about 270 metres to a rear position He further ordered D company, who had put an excellent smoke-screen by burning the houses west of Takia, to fall back on Takia line and cover the withdrawal of C company. These orders were carried out, the enemy was engaged with shell fire, and C company was safely extricated Before withdrawing, C company had,

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however, inflicted heavy casualties on the raiders in Siot The raiders were actually sleeping in Siot and came out on hearing the shots The total of enemy killed and wounded in the whole engagement, it was estimated, exceeded 100.

The engagement at Siot was fought in trying conditions The enemy had spread over the whole area north of Beri Pattan to Siot and beyond The ground was very broken over a distance of about 6 km, ending suddenly at the foot of a high ridge strongly held by the enemy. The Jats were out for two nights—slept in freezing cold in the open on the first night, made an advance on the second night and struck the enemy at dawn The enemy was taken by surprise, fired all over in confusion, and received a hard knock

For bringing up reinforcements and stores for the operations in this area, the enemy used the old Mughal route, Bhimbar-Assar-Kadala-Sadabad-Naushahra, their main base for the intended operations being Assar/Kadala only about 8 km from Bhimbar

To weaken and disrupt the enemy's offensive, the JAK Force Commander Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh, consulted the mobile force commander, Lt-Col Rajindar Singh, CO 7 Cav, and it was decided that CO 7 Cav would mount a mobile operation with the intention of engaging the enemy from their rear and destroying his main base at Assar/Kadala. Surprise was essential, so the plans of the intended operation were kept specially secret, only the JAK Force Commander, his GSO 1 Lt-Col J T Satarawala and Lt-Col Rajindar Singh knew what was to be done A mobile force known as 'Cheeta Force' composed of the following was put under command of Lt-Col Rajindar Singh[1]:—

7 Light Cavalry consisting of—
- (a) Regtl HQ—one troop armoured cars
- (b) HQ Sqn with troop of armoured cars
- (c) C Sqn of Stuart tanks
- (d) LAD 7 Cav

Two troops Central India Horse

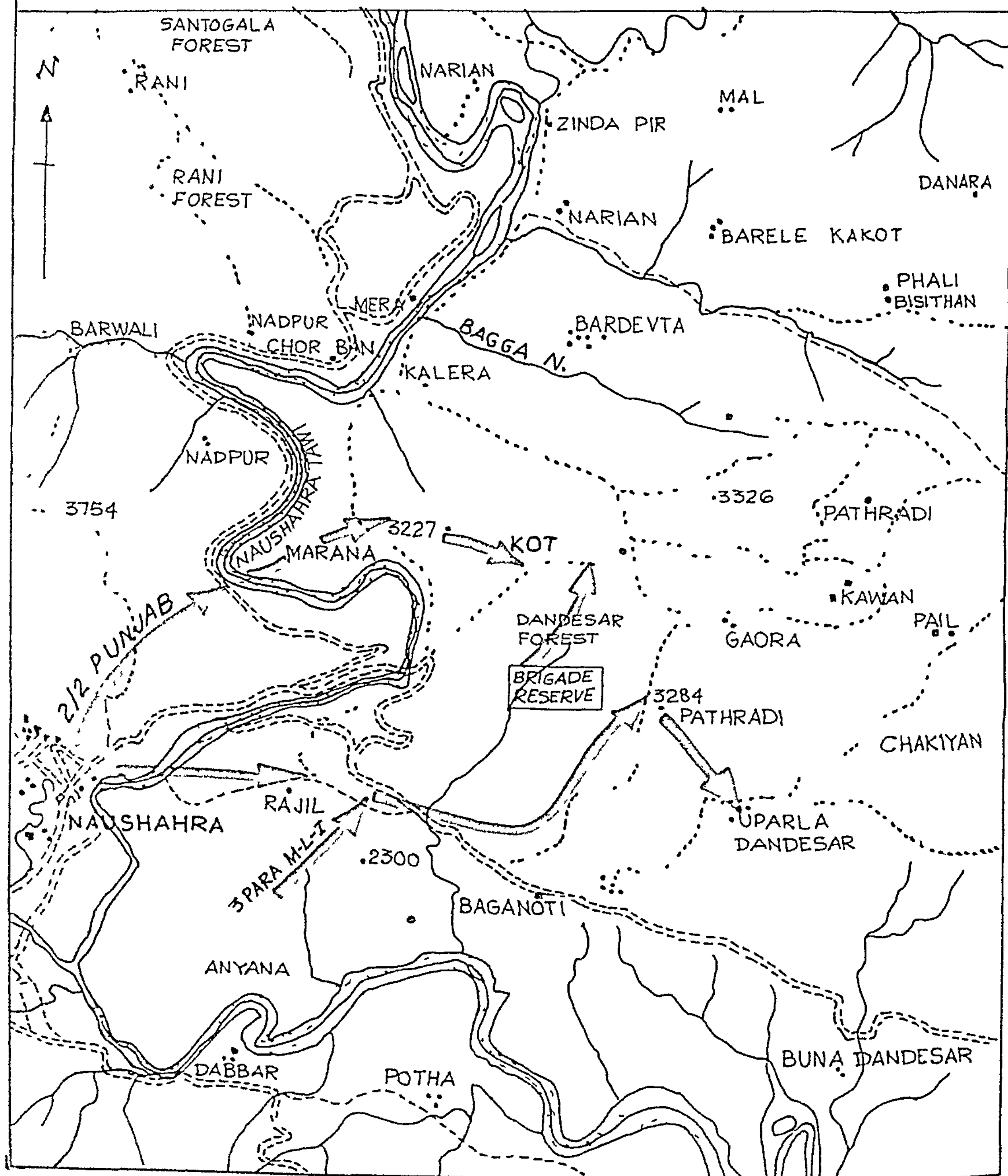
1/7 Rajput commanded by Lt-Col Girdhari Singh, MC (This battalion was made fully mobile with Dodges 4×4)

Detachment-Engineers and Signals

For security reasons all unit commanders of Cheeta Force were verbally ordered to concentrate at Chhamb by 24 January 1948, all moves to the concentration area were to be performed during darkness Verbal orders were given out on the spot at Chhamb by the Cheeta Force Commander, Lt-Col Rajindar Singh, on the evening of 24 January

The plan was simple Two small detachments of mixed armour and infantry were to be established at area Amberala and Chordhaki to guard the rear, the rest of the mobile column was to speedily push right

OPERATION KIPPER
31 JAN – 1 FEB 1948



light machine guns and about 400 rifles Enemy defences in area Kot and Pathradi were well sited and mutually supporting

On 30 January 1948 Brigadier Usman issued instructions for operation 'Kipper'—the code name for the operation carried out by 50 Para Bde Gp to dislodge the enemy from area Kot-Pathradi-Uparla Dandesar and to establish a permanent picquet in area Kot[2] The Brigade Order of Battle was as follows·

Tactical Headquarters 50 Para Bde
Detachment 50 Para Bde Gp
2/2 Punjab
3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry
A company 1 Rajput
B company 3 (Para) Rajput
A squadron 7 Cavalry
Y company 1 Mahar (MMG) less one platoon
Headquarters 22 Mountain Regiment RIA
7 Mountain Battery RIA less one section
30 Battery 11 Field Regiment RIA
Detachment 33 Field Ambulance
Detachment 22 Field Company RIE

The Brigade plan was to attack area Kot and Pathradi on a two battalion front On the left was 2/2 Punjab with objective Pt 3227 and Kot, on the right 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry with objectives Pt 3284, Pathradi and Uparla Dandesar The dividing line between these two battalions was the line of a *Nala* The assault was timed for 0630 hours on 1 February It was to be a 'silent' dawn attack Each battalion was to be given a Forward Observation Officer and a troop or a section of artillery in support in the event of their not reaching objectives by first light

Air Force was to support the ground attack by softening the strong enemy positions at Kot, Pathradi and Uparla Dandesar. The Air Force was also to carry out interdiction programme by isolating objectives This interdiction programme was to be carried out from 0830 to 1530 hours on 1 February.

While the main attack was to be made in area Kot, Pathradi and Uparla Dandesar, 2 Jat from Beri Pattan were to demonstrate during night 30/31 January towards Darghuan and Lamberi forest, destroying any opposition encountered, and return to camp on the evening of 31 January To carry out this task, 2 Jat were to advance from Ferry along road Beri Pattan-Naushahra to Sial, Simbal, Trat and the objectives (i e Darghuan and Lamberi forest)

A deception plan was worked out in great detail and with minute care It was spread over a period of three days with the object of making the enemy believe that an advance towards Jhangar was imminent Detachments of armoured cars and strong patrols were operated over tracks west of Naushahra every day for three days before the day of

area by 0430 hours Pt 3227, the first objective, was reached by 0700 hours without any trouble. One company then led the attack on Kot This company reached Kot without any opposition and went through Kot to the eastern most part of the village The company put up a success signal at 0710 hours, little realising that a counter-attack was in the offing The surprise was complete because the enemy were still asleep in their bunkers and houses when the company went through without searching the houses and without leaving anyone on the highest ground about 18 metres north of the village

The enemy tried to regain lost ground by three immediate counter-attacks on Pt 3227, Uparla Dandesar and Kot. At about 0658 hours on 1 February, hostiles estimated to be 50 strong advanced towards Pt 3227 and made an attempt to encircle it The attempt was frustrated and they were pushed back Then at about 0715 hours enemy counter-attacked the north-west corner of Uparla Dandesar The attack was repulsed with the help of the Mountain Battery Finally at about 0715 hours enemy, estimated to be 200 strong, launched a determined and powerful attack on Kot and hard pressed the company of 2/2 Punjab The company came under heavy fire from three sides Fierce fighting ensued in which the company suffered 11 casualties—7 killed and 4 wounded, and was forced to withdraw towards Pt 3227 After the recapture of Kot the enemy got into their bunkers again and opened up with light machine guns towards Pathradi and Pt 3227 Fortunately Brigade Headquarters with Brigade reserve (two Composite Rifle companies of 1 Rajput and 3 (Para) Rajput, one detachment 3-inch mortar 3 (Para) Rajput, and one section machine gun 1 Mahar with the commander of Reserve Group, Officer Commanding 3 (Para) Rajput) had moved up to the area and was able to deal with the situation Brigade reserve was now ordered to advance towards Kot and capture the high ground north-east of Kot Target was indicated to the circling aircraft who successfully attacked the area Indian artillery and 3-inch mortars gave covering fire to the Reserve Group, which launched a lightning attack and dislodged the enemy after a short and savage engagement 2/2 Punjab was also ordered to advance towards Kot again The quick manoeuvre by the Brigade Reserve Group saved the situation and Kot was recaptured at 1010 hours

After repulsing enemy counter-attacks, both 2/2 Punjab and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry sent out fighting patrols to follow up the enemy The extent of consolidation by following up the enemy was limited owing to lack of troops The hostiles were, however, successfully engaged and dispersed by the artillery A picquet called Kipper was established at Kot and so operation 'Kipper' was completed Total enemy casualties were 156 killed and 201 wounded. The enemy left behind 1 medium machine gun, 10 rifles, 50 grenades and large quantity of small arms ammunition

Judged by the results, the deception plan also was a success Enemy

was made to believe that an attack was being developed towards Bhajnoa He was very jittery and went on firing the whole night of 31 January/1 February A lot of enemy movement was seen on Bhajnoa ridge and Manpur village The hostiles sent out a patrol, 50 strong, who advanced along the road and occupied a house with the intention of encircling Banmanus The armoured cars opened up on the house and the enemy fled They also sent out a patrol from Nunial towards Pt 2096 which suffered casualties at the hands of the Indian picquet at Pt 2096 The prisoners captured from Kot-Pathradi area stated that they had not expected an attack and were taken completely by surprise

Air support for operation 'Kipper' was provided by Tempests from Jammu, which carried out tactical and offensive sorties over the Naushahra area On D-1, two Tempests registered targets over Pathradi, indicated by the ground visual control post, with a direct hit Enemy positions in Kot were heavily attacked On D day one Tempest was over the targets from 0730–0900 hours, two Tempests from 0930–1110 hours, two Tempests from 1100–1215 hours and one Tempest from 1410–1540 hours Enemy position 13 km north-east of Naushahra was attacked successfully under direction from the ground visual post Raiders' bunkers and dug-outs were destroyed in the vicinity of Kot Enemy huts pointed out by the ground troops and situated about 5 km north-east of Naushahra were also attacked effectively Approximately eight raiders were killed about 11 km north-east of Naushahra, and two were killed about 8 km north of Naushahra Two huts were burnt at Pathradi Several direct hits were made on enemy pockets of resistance and the retreating enemy was harassed a good deal

Artillery also played a very important part in operation 'Kipper' The following supporting arms were available for this operation

One field battery and one section 3 7-inch howitzers

Fourteen 3-inch mortars (6 for 2/2 Punjab, 6 for 3 (Para) Mahratta and 2 for Brigade reserve)

Two sections medium machine guns

Troop of armoured cars less one armoured car

The chief tasks of the artillery were

(i) To support troops to the objectives
(ii) To break up enemy counter-attacks after the capture of the objectives
(iii) To indicate targets to the Air.

The artillery carried out these tasks admirably 3 (Para) Mahratta secured P objective (Pathradi) by 0710 hours on 1 February and the Forward Observation Officer went forward to help them in consolidating the position The Mahratta company came under heavy automatic fire from left and front, this fire was neutralized immediately The enemy withdrew and tried to form up for counter-attack, which was broken up by artillery fire, 3 7-inch howitzers scoring direct hits on enemy positions At 0800 hours, the attack on Uparla Dandesar was

supported by artillery fire and targets were indicated to the Air, which successfully engaged them The objective was captured at 1115 hours Enemy concentration east of Pathradi was also successfully engaged

2/2 Punjab secured objective (Kot) without artillery support by 0710 hours Armoured cars engaged Kot on a timed programme from 0700 hours to 0710 hours with small arms and 2 pounders, they could not, however, be sent forward due to bad road At 0715 hours enemy counter-attacked the company of 2/2 Punjab and drove it back Artillery fire was immediately put down at Kot At 0900 hours one section of mortars and a section of medium machine guns, which had been manhandled to the conical feature nearby, supported Brigade Reserve's attack on Kot

The following lessons of great importance were learnt from operation 'Kipper'·

Mopping up of enemy and holding of ground vital to defence during consolidation period were essential after the capture of the objectives. The company of 2/2 Punjab, which attacked Kot, ignored this vital principle of offence and paid a severe penalty This company went through Kot without searching houses and enemy bunkers They advanced to two 'pimples' about 90 metres north-west of Kot without leaving any troops on the highest ground 18 metres north of Kot. The surprise was complete because the enemy were asleep in their bunkers and in the houses when the company went through without searching the houses Thus there were left untouched enemy pockets in Kot itself, with the result that the enemy counter-attacked and drove back the company This setback could have been avoided if the company had left some troops on the high ground to watch the north and west side of Kot, and if they had combed through Kot village

The Battalion Tactical Headquarters, it was proved again, must be well up in an offensive battle During the attack on Kot, 2/2 Punjab Headquarters lagged behind and they were unable to appreciate the situation properly and thus failed to influence the battle at the critical moment

Every unit or sub unit must have a small reserve centrally placed to be used at the decisive moment 2/2 Punjab reserve was behind Pt 3227 and hence it could not be of any use during the critical period when the enemy counter-attacked Kot On the contrary the Brigade reserve, although of only two companies made up from the personnel of 1 Rajput and 3 (Para) Rajput, was well forward and hence was able to influence the battle at the critical moment

It is essential for a Brigade attack to have one battalion in reserve and earmarked for consolidation only In this operation during the consolidation period the enemy could not be followed up to any great length or on any large scale Battalion commanders

sent out patrols to an extent of only about 1800 metres in front. Lack of a third battalion to exploit the success was badly felt The enemy would have received a really good knock out blow if another battalion had been available to chase the enemy

Forward Observation Officers must be with the forward companies, for then they can be of immense help in overcoming enemy resistance. The Forward Observation Officer with 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry did noticeably good work by spotting out and silencing enemy bunkers and machine guns.

Relay posts for carrying casualties must be provided From 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry Regimental Aid Post to Advanced Dressing Station was a long distance Hence troops had to be used to help the stretcher bearers to carry casualties This could, however, have been avoided by having a relay post.

Operation 'Kipper' is of some importance in the history of the operations in Jammu and Kashmir. It was the first major reverse inflicted on the enemy in prepared positions Capture of Kot area had a significant bearing on future operations, as it was from this base that the enemy used to operate on his often successful efforts to cut the supply route to Naushahra The occupation of Pathradi and Kot by the enemy would have rendered matters critical in the major attack on Naushahra that followed on 6 February As the first success after the loss of Jhangar, it had considerable value in raising the morale of the Indian troops

THE BATTLE OF NAUSHAHRA

After the victory at Kot, Brigadier Usman prepared to attack the enemy in Kalal area at 0600 hours on 6 February But from intelligence reports he learnt that a powerful attack on Naushahra was imminent He, therefore, put ahead the starting time of the operation by one hour and warned all picquets and posts to double their sentries and increase their vigilance, thus averting what would most certainly have been a great catastrophe—the loss of Naushahra

Stung by the loss of Kot, the enemy launched on 6 February 1948 the expected all-out attack on Naushahra The attack was well organised and well coordinated The enemy commenced his concentrated and simultaneous attacks on the defences of Naushahra at 0640 hours on 6 February under cover of darkness The picquets at Kot and Tain Dhar were heavily mortared between 0640 and 0715 hours The attackers, estimated to be 3000 Pathans of Swat and Dir and 3000 Sudhans, surrounded Tain Dhar and Kot picquets respectively, and attacked fiercely with light machine guns, grenades and swords

It was the Tain Dhar picquets, particularly picquet No. 2, which bore the brunt of the attack At 0643 hours the enemy opened fire from their picquet on the Tain Dhar ridge on a strong Indian patrol which was already out from Kot to the high ground north-east of it Simultaneously

the whole Tain Dhar feature and the hills north, west and east of it came alive with bursts of machine guns and crunches of mortar fire The enemy under the cover of darkness had crept up to the Indian picquets and defensive positions on commanding features With the first light the men in the picquets and posts saw thousands of hostiles creeping up on their posts In spite of heavy casualties, wave after wave of the hostiles hurled themselves at the picquets like an angry sea against the rocks, on one of the No 2 picquet's posts, three waves of attacks were halted on the barbed wire A party of enemy got through and some of them reached the picquet wall and grabbed the Bren gun in the picquet By now, of the 27 men in the picquet, 24 were dead or wounded Naik Jadunath Singh of 1 Rajput performed the highest act of gallantry and supreme sacrifice, and was awarded Param Vir Chakra posthumously The surviving three stuck to their post In a hand to hand fight, two were fatally wounded The last man still defied the enemy This was the most critical moment of the whole battle Fortunately, help was at hand At about 0715 hours Brigadier Usman, realising the gravity of the situation, sent a company of 3 (Para) Rajput to reinforce the main picquet This company reached the main picquet just in time to stop the enemy getting into the post It was the turning point of the whole battle If the company had not reached there in time the Tain Dhar picquets would have been overrun and Naushahra would have become untenable

The struggle at Kot was equally severe The enemy fired eighty 3-inch mortar bombs on the Indian positions at Kot Fighting continued throughout the day and night of 6/7 February. Indian troops held the onslaught and after severe fighting beat off the enemy attacks The estimated enemy casualties in the fighting at Kot and Tain Dhar were 400 killed and 250 wounded

Besides attacking Tain Dhar and Kot picquets, enemy also attacked the Kangota picquet This picquet was heavily mortared and attacked at about 0700 hours About 1000 enemy surrounded the picquet and tried to rush it Here again hand to hand fighting went on for hours, before the attackers were hurled back

Simultaneously with the attacks on Kot and Tain Dhar, enemy, approximately 5000 strong, attacked other picquets from the west and south-west The hostiles who launched this attack were mostly Pathans Indian artillery, mortars, and medium machine guns engaged the hostiles, who were 'pouring in endless stream' for full four hours One medium machine gun fired 9000 rounds at point blank range into mass formations of the enemy

To meet this serious threat to the Naushahra valley, Brigadier Usman decided to take the offensive and send his small reserve to attack the enemy concentration south-west of Naushahra This he could do only after the return to camp of 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, who had gone out on road-opening duties at 0600 hours When enemy

had gone out that morning for L of C protection But the guns kept the enemy at bay Such was the intensity of the enemy attack that for a time the guns fired at a range of only about 900 metres

When 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry came back to the camp, they were ordered to put in a counter-attack on the Radian feature, which was taken without a single casualty When the Mahrattas started fanning out, the hostiles could not raise their heads because shells were bursting all around The Mahrattas charged forward and soon the never failing artillery and the gallant Mahrattas won the day. The enemy fled but was pursued relentlessly by the guns At one place, about five hundred Pathans were caught in the open Guns opened up with air burst fuse Mutilated dead bodies and limbs strewn over that area bore ample testimony to the effectiveness of the artillery fire

The attack on Kot was also repulsed with artillery support One of the Indian patrols, which had gone out in the morning, was surrounded by the enemy, but was extricated with the help of the artillery

As the tempo of the enemy attack died out, new Defensive Fire (SOS) tasks were registered Artillery concentrations were brought down all night on Potha, Nunial, Dhindeka and other likely forming up places of the enemy Several enemy attacks on Tain Dhar during the night fizzled out because of artillery fire on targets registered by day. During the twenty-four hours (i e from 0700 hours on 6 February to 0700 hours on 7 February), gunners fired more than 500 rounds

Close air support was provided by the RIAF, and enemy concentrations and strong points in the area were successfully strafed and bombed on 6 February Tempests based at Amritsar flew four offensive sorties over Naushahra, Chhamb and Kathua areas Enemy concentrations about 5 and 6 km north-west of Naushahra were subjected to severe attacks A little north of this area, six huts sheltering raiders were destroyed The Air Contact Car indicated enemy position 8 km north-west of Naushahra An attack on this feature killed six raiders On a ridge nearby, an enemy light machine gun position was located and successfully attacked On 7 February, Tempests and Harvards based at Jammu flew eight tactical, offensive and border reconnaissance sorties Dakotas flew three sorties between Jammu and Naushahra, transporting 6,110 kg of artillery ammunition, mines and barbed wire All supplies were parachuted, and the drops were successful The area surrounding Chingas was bombed Kot and an area 8 km north of Naushahra, indicated by the Air Contact Car and by red smoke, were attacked, and some sixteen hostiles were killed

Brigadier Usman and his men gave a good account of themselves in repelling wave after wave of enemy attacks on Naushahra The enemy paid dearly for his audacity in engaging the Indian troops in a pitched battle According to a conservative estimate by Brigadier Usman, the total of hostiles killed was more than 2000, 963 dead bodies being actually counted His own casualties were a total of 33 killed and 102

CHAPTER VIII

Recapture of Jhangar

(March 1948)

THE SITUATION

After the victory at Naushahra on 6 February 1948, the stage was set for the recapture of Jhangar Operations passed through three phases In the first phase (7–29 February 1948), Indian troops probed enemy defensive positions In the second phase (1–4 March), a double thrust was made—one directed against Ambli Dhar and the other against Kaman Gosha Gala In the third phase (5–18 March), Operation 'Vijay' was carried out, resulting in the recapture of Jhangar on 18 March

Even after receiving a severe hammering at Naushahra, enemy continued to hold in strength the defensive positions around Naushahra The Indian sources of information were the fighting patrols and the prisoners and captured documents Sometimes civilians escaped from territory held by hostiles and gave bits of information It became evident by 20 February that the hostiles had three battalions in the Naushahra-Jhangar valley The right battalion, commanded by Raja Muhammad Khan, was responsible for the area from Raepur Kamila upto Pt 2210 The battalion headquarters was in Kanara and the sub-units of the battalion were holding Ambli Dhar, Keri, Gai and Pt 2210 The strength of the battalion was 300, with two medium machine guns, three light machine guns, and one 3-inch mortar, besides rifles The battalion consisted mainly of locals and Kashmir State Force deserters The centre battalion was spread in area Langar, Shan Da Mohra, and Loharan Di Patti It was the reserve battalion and probably a weak one The left battalion, commanded by Captain Fateh Khan, held Manpur ridge, Bhajnoa, and Dhindeka and was responsible for checking any advance on the road It consisted mainly of Pathans and had one 3-inch mortar, and two light machine guns Advanced Brigade Headquarters, commanded by Kashmir Khan (Pathan) was in Langar and the Rear Headquarters was in Kalsian There were enemy concentrations in areas Raepur Kamila, Ambli Dhar, Bagh, Dhindeka, Bhajnoa, Kaman Gosha Gala, Kalal, Bardevta, Bhata and Nadpur Thus the ring of enemy positions was tight around Naushahra

Reinforcements were sent by Gen Kalwant Singh to Naushahra to enable the garrison to carry out an offensive sweep to clear the area of the enemy On 8 February, Tactical Headquarters 19 Independent Infantry Brigade and 2 Rajputana Rifles arrived at Naushahra, 4 Dogra reached on 11 February and 1 Kumaon Rifles on 17 February Further, 2 Jat (50 Para Bde) moved up from Beri Pattan to Naushahra on

18 February and took over the picquets from 1 Rajput. The role of 1 Rajput (and later of 2 Jat) was to continue to exert constant pressure from Tain Dhar picquets against enemy positions at Bhata and Ambli Dhar. 2 Rajputana Rifles who relieved 3 (Para) Rajput at Kot on 15 February, were directed against enemy positions in that area 4 Dogra and 1 Kumaon Rifles hammered at the enemy defensive positions in area Bagh, Dhindeka, Bhajnoa and Kaman Gosha Gala, besides protecting the road leading from Naushahra to Beri Pattan

FIRST PHASE OF THE OPERATIONS

In the first phase of the operations (7–29 February 1948), the garrison of Naushahra confined its activities to probing into enemy positions On 13 February, 2 Rajputana Rifles, 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry and 1 Rajput carried out an offensive sweep to clean up the area Bardevta, Pathradi, and Uparla Dandesar. Very little opposition was met The enemy fled away on contact except at Mera, where the Indian patrol was attacked by the enemy, who, however, fled in disorder after hand to hand fighting

On 14 February, 2 Rajputana Rifles attacked the enemy position at Kaman Gosha Gala, while 4 Dogra protected their off flank. The column returned to base in the afternoon on 15 February after encounters with the enemy at Pt 2758, in Turoi and Gura areas The enemy position at Pt. 2758, from where he fired at the Indian column, was neutralised by artillery fire In Turoi and Gura areas the columns observed two hundred hostiles moving south, and the artillery engaged them effectively. On 19 February one strong patrol to area Kaman Gosha Gala was fired at and withdrew without suffering any casualties. The picquet at Kot was attacked by the enemy, about 300 strong, at 2015 hours on 19 February. The attack was repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy

On 20 February, 1 Kumaon Rifles (which temporarily came under command of 50 Para Bde on this day) carried out an offensive sweep of Bagh area while 4 Dogra cleaned up area Numal-Manpur. 1 Kumaon Rifles left Naushahra Camp at 0745 hours on 20 February on Laroka track to establish a base in Bagh area The battalion had hardly gone about 2 km forward between picquets No. 7 and No 8, when it encountered medium machine gun fire, and returned to Camp after a sharp engagement.

4 Dogra less two companies left Naushahra at 0730 hours on 20 February to clean up area Numal-Manpur Having crossed the Jhambir *Nala*, one company established position on high ground and then the remainder advanced up to No 6 picquet without being fired at by the enemy. One company occupied the feature while the other swung towards Manpur The latter encountered heavy opposition from enemy light machine gun and mortar fire At 1400 hours the Dogras started withdrawal Enemy tried to follow up but tactical skill enabled the Dogras to withdraw without any casualty.

Village Kalal was an important base of the enemy, who had been recently reinforced. 1 Kumaon Rifles was given the task of capturing and destroying this village Guides from 2/2 Punjab were to guide the battalion to Kangota feature and from there to the objective Flank protection was to be provided by 2/2 Punjab and 4 Dogra The former on the left flank was to post a picquet at Pt 3052, while the Dogras were to operate on the right flank and eventually establish picquets in area Kaman Gosha Gala and Pt. 2999

The following troops were under command of 1 Kumaon Rifles

One section medium machine gun 1 Mahar
Detachment Brigade Signal Company
Detachment 29 Field Ambulance
One troop 3 Field Battery was in support

Everything went according to the plan 1 Kumaon Rifles moved out of the Naushahra Camp at 0100 hours on 22 February Village Kalal was encircled by A and C companies The Pioneers with the Defence Platoon then entered the village and set fire to it After accomplishing its task the battalion withdrew at 1430 hours [1]

Although 1 Kumaon Rifles successfully carried out its task of destroying the enemy base in village Kalal, 4 Dogra operating on the right flank encountered stiff opposition The Dogras left Camp at 0115 hours on 22 February 1948 The route taken was via Kangota The Dogras reached Pt 3052 at approximately 0840 hours and then simultaneously captured enemy position at Pt 2758 and several ring contours Enemy continued to snipe these positions heavily After 1 Kumaon Rifles carried out its withdrawal from village Kalal, as the Dogras started withdrawal, they were followed by enemy in large numbers In a severe engagement, Lieut-Colonel I J S Butalia, Officer Commanding 4 Dogra, was killed[2] The Commanding Officer of 1 Kumaon Rifles hurried back with A and C companies and took charge of the situation The Indian troops then broke contact with the enemy and returned to Camp at 0300 hours on 23 February

Similar bitterly contested, small scale engagements continued during the remaining days of February 1948 They were bloody affairs for either side, but enabled Brig Usman to feel out the enemy, subject him to severe attrition and slowly gain ascendancy over him

SECOND PHASE OF THE OPERATIONS

Indian troops continued to probe into enemy defences, while at the same time preparations continued for a double thrust against Ambli Dhar and Kaman Gosha Gala preliminary to the main operation for the capture of Jhangar

There lay a huge dumb-bell like feature overlooking Naushahra from the north The eastern half of the dumb-bell was known as Tain Dhar and the western half as Ambli Dhar This dumb-bell was over 6 km long and had no natural boundary separating the two halves, except

approach march, for the noise made by their boots on rocky patches was not heard by the enemy The area of the feature had been divided into three small bounds The first bound was reached before first light There was opposition during the advance to the second bound The enemy suddenly opened up with all he had, and the Jats sustained the first casualty—one man wounded The leading platoon, however, continued the advance, using grenades and light machine gun fire against the enemy Pt 3319 was captured and the leading company took up position on the objective and engaged the retreating enemy by fire The enemy disappeared in the low ground about 180 metres from the objective

There was half an hours' lull—a very treacherous lull indeed—for the enemy was getting ready for a counter-attack The skirmishers had gone forward to keep in contact with the enemy They collected eight dead Pathans and some rifles at the edge of the *Nala* But the enemy attacked in groups of twenty and thirty and took their dead and arms away Shortly after this, the enemy counter-attack developed on the eastern side of the objective But by this time the remaining two platoons of D company were in position on the west With the combined efforts of A & D companies and the "guerillas" the enemy counter-attack was repulsed The "guerillas" however reported that the enemy was preparing for another counter-attack B, the reserve company, was now brought forward and it helped to repulse the attack The hostiles retired in confusion The casualties of the Jats in this action were 1 JCO and 2 Other Ranks killed and 7 Other Ranks wounded It was estimated that 80 hostiles were either killed or wounded The victory of Ambli Dhar certainly reflects much credit on the Jats. Their undaunted bravery and steadfastness had crowned their efforts with success

Meanwhile, on the left, 1 Rajput were directed against Pt 2916 Their task was to capture Pt 2916 and protect the left flank of 2 Jat, while the latter captured Pt 3319 and established a picquet there 1 Rajput left Naushahra Camp at 2355 hours on 29 February and captured the objective by 0530 hours on 1 March The Rajputs withdrew at 1500 hours on 2 March after the picquet had been established, and returned to the Camp

While 50 Para Brigade, on the right secured Ambli Dhar, 19 Independent Brigade Group made a thrust towards Kaman Gosha Gala 4 Dogra and 2/2 Punjab were assigned the task of clearing this feature At 0400 hours on 1 March, B, C and D companies of 2/2 Punjab concentrated in order to establish picquets at Pt 2999 and Pt 3574 B and D companies, supported by 4 Dogra, led the attack on Pt. 2999 and captured it without difficulty C company 2/2 Punjab and a company of 4 Dogra then advanced to attack the enemy at Pt 3574 The companies were pinned down as the enemy was on the feature which overlooked them Another company of 4 Dogra trying to reinforce the hard-pressed forward companies from the right bumped into enemy, about 60 in number, who were trying to outflank and attack the forward companies

Artillery bombardment and air strafing helped to relieve the situation and at 1000 hours Pt. 3574 was captured. Picquets were established at Pt 2999 and Pt. 3574 The hostiles continued to snipe the picquet at Pt 3574 heavily till 1630 hours Enemy also fired at the picquet at Pt 2999 from a nearby feature, but were driven away by an attack launched by B company 2/2 Punjab on that feature.

1 Rajput concentrated in area Pt 3574 with the intention of occupying the ground around No 1 Bump near Katora Khori in order to enable B company 2/2 Punjab to establish a picquet on the next feature At 0030 hours on 5 March, 1 Rajput moved forward from the assembly area D company led the attack The company was half way up the objective when the enemy opened up with two medium machine guns, two light machine guns and about a hundred rifles. The company tried to assault but could not do so due to the very steep slope The company commander, though wounded, kept his company in position against heavy odds until C company attacked and captured the objective The enemy withdrew at 1015 hours after suffering heavy casualties. The casualties of 1 Rajput were one company commander, 2 JCOs and 29 Other Ranks wounded, and 10 Other Ranks killed While 1 Rajput held the Bump, B company 2/2 Punjab advanced to attack and capture the main feature Against heavy fire, B company captured the feature at about 1200 hours Having enabled B company 2/2 Punjab to establish a picquet at the feature, 1 Rajput returned to Naushahra at 2400 hours

THE THIRD PHASE—'OPERATION VIJAY'

By 5 March 1948, JAK Force had secured the Ambli Dhar feature and had cleared the enemy from Kaman Gosha Gala and was thus ready to undertake the operation for the recapture of Jhangar As a result of the Indian success in securing the high ground, the enemy brigade pulled out from Ambli Dhar and Kaman Gosha Gala areas The right battalion of the enemy in area Ambli Dhar pulled out by Laroka track The centre battalion with Brigade HQ retired from area Langar to Jhangar The left battalion from area Dhindeka pulled out to Pir Thil area

On 5 March Major-General Kalwant Singh issued instructions for the recapture of Jhangar JAK Force was to recapture Jhangar as soon as the rain abated and weather improved The operation, which was given the code name of 'Vijay', was to be carried out in the following two phases:-

Phase I

19 Independent Brigade Group, consisting of 1 Rajput, 4 Dogra, 1 Kumaon Rifles and ancillary units, was to secure objective Pt 3327, Pt. 3283 and exploit towards Nakka gap The road from objective to Naushahra was to be opened as early as possible. Time of start of this operation was D day

OPERATION VIJAY
15-18 MARCH 1948

SCALE OF KILOMETRES

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RIVERS

ROADS & TRACKS

INDIAN THRUST

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Phase II

On completion of Phase I, 50 Para Brigade Group, consisting of 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, 3 (Para) Rajput, 1 Patiala and ancillary units, was to secure objectives Pt 2701, Jhangar, Pt 3399 and Pt 3374

The defence of Naushahra area, including protection of Naushahra-Seri, and the local administration of the Naushahra garrison, was to be the responsibility of the Naushahra garrison, consisting of 2/2 Punjab, 2 Jat, 2 Rajputana Rifles and ancillary units. Troops of the Naushahra garrison at Ambli Dhar and Kaman Gosha Gala were to watch the right and left flanks, and support the advance of 19 Brigade

Facing 19 Brigade, the enemy had his strong points at Orange Hill, Katarna Choti, and "Plateau" Commander 19 Brigade assigned the task of clearing enemy from these positions to 1 Kumaon Rifles 1 Kumaon Rifles was to lead the attack and capture Handan ridge up to line Kanara-Kandal.

Detachment 54 Field Ambulance and detachment 37 Field Company were placed under command, while the following troops were in support of 1 Kumaon Rifles

Troop armoured cars
Divisional artillery
37 Anti-Tank Battery
Section medium machine gun

The operations had to be postponed for sometime due to heavy rains But at 1700 hours on 7 March, D company occupied Katarna Choti without opposition A company was sent out to reinforce D company on Katarna Choti, and C company was ordered to secure Pt. 2210. Both the companies reached their objectives at 1900 hours on 7 March. On 8 March, C company thinned out from Pt. 2210 and joining hands with B company (which alongwith Tactical Headquarters had moved forward at 0700 hours on 8 March) attacked and captured Jabbar Hill without much opposition. D company remained behind at Katarna Choti and A company with Tactical Headquarters and Main Headquarters, which soon followed, established themselves at the Plateau

Enemy's next line of defences was in area Gaikot Forest, Nakka defile, Pt. 3477 and further west in area Jhangar Dharamsal. Likely places of enemy resistance between these positions and east of line Gaikot Forest-Pt 3477 were· area Pt 3327, area Pt. 2856, Nothi Dhar, Chahi, Kalsian, Pt. 3283, Pt.3393, Khambah Fort, Pt. 3574 and Pt.2701

On 10 March Major-General Kalwant Singh cancelled the previous instructions issued on 5 March and gave fresh orders for the recapture of Jhangar [3] JAK Force was to advance on Jhangar in two parallel columns, 19 Independent Brigade Group on the right and 50 Para Brigade Group on the left The plan was a very great improvement on the old one since the two brigade groups were given separate axes of

advance with 7 Light Cav between them on the Naushahra-Jhangar road The preliminary operations were to be completed by evening D minus 1. 19 Brigade Group was to establish firm base in a ring contour area, while 50 Para Brigade Group was to establish firm base in area Pt 3110 After establishing these bases the Brigade Groups were to advance on two axes—the inter-brigade boundary being road Naushahra-Jhangar

19 Brigade was to have the following troops under command:

19 Brigade Signal Company
19 Brigade LAD
Two companies 1 Rajput (Battalion less two companies in Force Reserve)
4 Dogra
1 Kumaon Rifles
One platoon 1 Mahar (Machine Gun)
A company 29 Field Ambulance
Headquarters 54 Field Ambulance
113 Workshop Company

The following troops were to be in support

One troop light tanks 7 Cavalry
5 Mountain Battery
30 Field Battery } on call
Troop 45 Field Battery } on call
One platoon 37 Field Company
Four carriers
Visual Control Post

50 Para Brigade was to have the following troops under command

50 Para Brigade Signal Section
50 Para Brigade LAD
3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry
3 (Para) Rajput
1 Patiala
Y Company 1 Mahar (Machine Gun) less one platoon and one section
33 Field Ambulance

The following troops were in support

One troop light tanks 7 Cavalry
One troop armoured cars 7 Cavalry
7 Mountain Battery
30 Field Battery } on call
Troop 45 Field Battery } on call
Troop 37 Anti-Tank Battery
One platoon 22 Field Company
Four carriers
FST (Field Surgical Team)
Visual Control Post

7 Light Cavalry column under command Lieut-Colonel Rajindar Singh comprised:[4]

Regtl HQ
A sqn
C sqn
HQ sqn
LAD 7 Cav
One sqn CIH
Det 22 Fd Coy Engrs
Two pls Pnrs
Coy 1 Rajput

A sqn 7 Cav was already in position at Naushahra C sqn was then operating in Akhnur area and was ordered to move to Naushahra The move of this squadron of tanks was kept most secret, in that—

(a) all the tanks were camouflaged with wooden frames and tarpaulins so that they looked like three-ton vehicles from a distance,
(b) the whole move from Akhnur to Naushahra was carried out during the hours of darkness,
(c) traffic and security arrangements were so worked out that at the time the tanks were on the road (at night) no other movement was permitted and no person was allowed to get near the tanks,
(d) on arrival in Naushahra, tanks were concealed and camouflaged in a detached area where no person was allowed It may be of interest to point out that, even the Indian troops in Naushahra, it was learnt later, remained unaware till D day that tanks had arrived.

All these security arrangements paid high dividend in the end, the enemy was unaware of the arrival of tanks in the area and was, as a result, completely surprised

Defence of Naushahra area, including protection of Naushahra-Seri and local administration of the Naushahra garrison, was to be the responsibility of the Naushahra garrison under the command of Lieut-Colonel Kartar Singh The Naushahra garrison was to consist of.

2/2 Punjab
2 Rajputana Rifles
2 Jat
One platoon 1 Mahar MG
601 Supply Platoon RIASC (for administration only)

The following troops were to be in support.

One squadron 7 Cavalry
One troop 45 Field Battery

Troops of the Naushahra garrison at Ambli Dhar and Pt. 3030 were to watch the right and left flanks and support the advance of the two forward brigades 19 Brigade was to send a party of irregulars with a detachment of infantry on D minus 2 to Darhal Fort. Naushahra garrison

was to send reconnaissance in force to Barete Ka Kot and Nadpar on D minus 2, as part of the deception plan.

It was estimated that two enemy battalions with six medium machine guns, three light automatics and two 3-inch mortars were in area Pir Thil Nakka and south of it.

The preliminary operation was concerned with securing Pt 3110. Operations had to be postponed till 15 March due to heavy rain. Some gains were however made. On 12 March 3 (Para) Rajput attacked and captured Pt 3030. Next day 2/2 Punjab secured Nothi Dhar. On 14 March the weather cleared, and the concentration of 50 Para Brigade Group at Nothi Dhar was completed by 1630 hours on that day. Then preparations began for the attack on Pir Thil Nakka. The preliminary operations were concerned with finding a suitable route for the attack on this feature. The Pir Thil Nakka feature from north to south was some two and a half kilometres long. The northern part was heavily wooded, with the eastern face very steep. The approach to the feature—a distance of about 4500 metres from the start line—was dominated by the high ground held by the enemy.

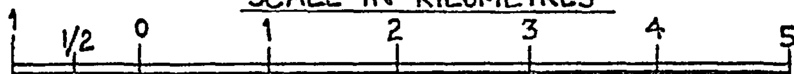
On 15 March 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, with two Forward Observation Officers, was sent on offensive reconnaissance to locate enemy positions in the Pir Thil area. The advance was made at 0530 hours on a two-company front, with C company on the left and B company on the right. D company was in reserve with Battalion Headquarters. The Mahrattas advanced on Pir Thil feature along the southern approach, but were soon held up. With a suddenness showing perfect planning on the part of the enemy, C company was pinned down by heavy fire on the low ground at about 1030 hours. The company commander was killed. Three ORs were also killed as they gallantly tried to bring back his body in the face of withering fire. The Battalion Headquarters in the rear was subjected to 3-inch mortar fire, and one officer was killed. The enemy was well entrenched along the spur and the slightest movement attracted accurate fire from medium machine guns of which they seemed to have a large number. 3-inch mortars seemed to have the Indian position well registered.

At 1100 hours, Lieut-Colonel Harbans Singh Virk, DSO, the battalion commander, ordered D company forward from its reserve role. He pointed out the bunkered objective along the spur to the company commander and ordered its immediate capture at the point of the bayonet in order to extricate C company. All Bren guns of the battalion were brought up to the forward line, to support the attack. As D company debouched to the attack, word came across the wireless from the Brigade Commander ordering a halt and a withdrawal to defensive positions in the rear. Lieut-Colonel Virk requested to be allowed to prepare defensive positions as far as the battalion had advanced instead of withdrawing to a position in the rear. The request was agreed to, and as was proved later, it had an immense bearing on

CAPTURE OF PIR THIL

17 MARCH 1948

SCALE IN KILOMETRES



further operations Its immediate effect was the bolstering of the morale of the men They solidly dug in where they were, as bullets whined around them Wire was a luxury commodity and a few strands were strung across the forward positions Further operations were confined to guarding the flanks of C company from the enemy, who made several attempts to collect for an assault D company countered the enemy moves from the left ridge and A company from the right The Mahratta casualties in this engagement were 5 killed and 13 wounded.

It was clear that the enemy held the southern slopes in considerable strength, and the movement to the west attracted heavy enemy fire Therefore next day a company of 1 Patiala operated in that area to find out the enemy position which could be outflanked The company came under fire from north, west and Dungidal feature. Forty-eight hours of intensive reconnaissance thus showed that an attack from this direction or a detour to further west would be very costly and difficult The question of by-passing the enemy position was ruled out It was now estimated that on the whole feature and the surrounding area there was an equivalent of one enemy brigade, six medium machine guns, a couple of light machine guns and two 3-inch mortars. Obviously the enemy was determined to fight hard to retain this important feature

In the light of the information gained about the enemy dispositions, Brigadier Usman modified his original plan He now decided to attack two places on the Pir Thil feature about 360 metres apart with two battalions—3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry on the right and 1 Patiala on the left

3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry was to attack seven minutes earlier to 1 Patiala in order to get maximum artillery support After five minutes of artillery concentration on each objective, the assault was to go in at 0700 hours One company was to engage the enemy from the south to create diversion Armour was to engage the enemy from his rear Air was to isolate the southern part of the feature during the attack by offensive sweep and smoke

In implementation of the Brigade plan, the commander of 1 Patiala issued instructions for the attack on Bump by C company on the right and D company on the left The companies were to creep to within 270 metres of the enemy by 0600 hours on 17 March The reserve companies were to be in area Pt 3110 by the same time. Medium machine guns were to support from area Pt. 3110. The assault was to go in at 0710 hours after five minutes of heavy artillery and mortar concentration Twenty-four guns, the largest mustering of artillery upto that time, were provided to give softening fire before the attack went in Digging in at the farthest point of earlier advance now yielded good results, for the battalion could command a large area as 'Jumping-off' places for the attack.

The Mahrattas moved off to the start line at 0400 hours on 17 March and crouched about 270 metres from the rugged face of Pir Thil

Nakka The men of D company and A company surged forward with the rest close behind, as the artillery tore up the hill face in front of them The enemy opened up with medium machine gun and small arms fire. This could not now stop the headlong rush of the Mahrattas The forward platoons, in a frontline attempt to keep contact in the broken and wooded ground, raised the war cries that had reverberated at Keren In a second every man took up the battle cry and dashed forward with fixed bayonets. The entrenched enemy broke and fled down the rear slopes as the Mahrattas clambered over the steep hill-side The Mahrattas did not suffer a single casualty.

Meanwhile 1 Patiala too had met with success Heavy smoke and dust still covered the objectives, when amidst the deafening fire of all descriptions, the forward companies of 1 Patiala left the start line at 0700 hours on 17 March Very rapid progress was made By 0720 hours the leading troops assaulted the crest and broke through the first line of enemy defence The dazed and confounded enemy opened up with one medium machine gun, one light machine gun, one mortar and some rifles, but resistance was soon overcome and the enemy's first line crumbled It was a mass of rubble, pools of blood and mutilated enemy bodies

Having carried the first line of defence, the leading troops came under small arms fire from well-hidden strongly built and cleverly sited bunkers By sheer determination and gallantry, the leading troops rolled up the enemy's second defence line during the course of the next ten minutes In this assault on the enemy's second line of defence, the commanders of the two leading companies (Major Shamsher Singh and Captain Hazura Singh) particularly distinguished themselves by displaying brilliant leadership and initiative. Sepoy Hari Singh of the left forward company of 1 Patiala showed courage in attacking the enemy, killing four of them including a Captain, and following up this success by the destruction of the enemy bunkers The retreating enemy (at least 150 carrying some 50 casualties) were spotted down in the valley some 900 metres away and were very effectively engaged by the guns. Pir Thil feature was captured and consolidated by 0800 hours It was estimated that the total enemy casualties were 100 killed, and 100 wounded

The capture of the strong enemy position at Pir Thil was possible largely due to the following significant factors

(i) Soundness of the brigade plan
(ii) Effectiveness of artillery concentration
(iii) Thorough night reconnaissance and the creeping up of the forward companies to within 270 metres of the objective before daylight
(iv) The diversion and deception plan
(v) The determination and gallantry of the troops

At 1030 hours on 17 March, 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry plus one company 3 (Para) Rajput followed up this success by attacking

Susoloti Dhar. After a thorough beating at Pir Thil the enemy had not the heart to offer resistance from this feature. Only a few artillery rounds were fired on this feature to complete the discomfiture of the enemy and to compel him to retire towards Jhangar. 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry captured the feature by 1258 hours without opposition. This victory was decisive, and but for the administrative constraints, the troops would have easily reached Jhangar the same evening

While 50 Para Brigade Group captured Pir Thil Nakka, 19 Brigade Group captured Gaikot Forest. On 14 March, 1 Kumaon Rifles, as forward battalion of 19 Brigade, resumed its advance, B, C and D companies attacked and captured Pt 2856 and subsequently Pt. 3327 in face of opposition. On the same day, C company 1 Rajput,[5] protecting the right flank of 19 Brigade, captured its objective Tangni Dhar after some fighting. Next day this company, assisted by A company 4 Dogra captured Darhal Fort without a single casualty 19 Brigade had thus secured Pt 3327 and protected its flank by capturing the Darhal Fort. The way was now prepared for a double thrust towards Gaikot Forest—on the right by 4 Dogra and on the left by 1 Kumaon Rifles. 4 Dogra, with a company of 1 Rajput under command, concentrated at Basah during night 16/17 March to launch an attack on Gaikot Forest On 17 March the double attack was made on Gaikot Forest, by 1 Kumaon Rifles from Pt 3327 and 4 Dogra from Basah By 1600 hours on 17 March, the objective had been captured The enemy casualties were estimated to be 60

Thus, by 17 March, 50 Para Brigade had captured Pir Thil Nakka while 19 Brigade had advanced to Gaikot Forest. The way was now clear for the final attack on Jhangar At 0830 hours on 18 March, 3 (Para) Rajput captured Pt. 3477 and by 1000 Tactical Headquarters 50 Para Bde, 3 (Para) Mahratta and 1 Patiala concentrated at this feature The Brigade plan was to attack with two forward battalions—1 Patiala on the right was to secure objective ring contour and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry on the left was to secure objective Pt 3399 and Pt 3574 1 Patiala less two companies concentrated at Pt 3477 by 1030 hours on 18 March The enemy had one night's respite and was holding positions thinly with two light machine guns and about a company strength covering the withdrawal 1 Patiala attacked the positions with two companies After a brief artillery and mortar shoot the objective was carried by 1245 hours—the troops captured the height literally at the double. From here onwards both the companies leap-frogged, making bounds of about 900 metres each The leading company by 1400 hours came under fairly accurate automatic and rifle fire from enemy sangars around Pt 3574 This was the last enemy position overlooking Jhangar, which was now desolate and deserted. On the left, 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry had captured Pt 3399 by 1300 hours At 1315 hours, mountain guns registered and engaged targets on Pt 3574 from where two automatics and about 25 rifles were firing on 1 Patiala Then

1 Patiala attacked a ring contour and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry attacked Pt 3574 simultaneously Both the objectives were secured by 1500 hours on 18 March Enemy fled towards Mirpur, leaving behind 46 dead and considerable amount of ammunition

The armoured column in the centre had started its advance along the Naushahra-Jhangar road on the morning of 17 March, led by the Stuart tanks of C squadron 7 Cavalry The road was water-logged due to the heavy rains of the previous few days, and was also mined by the enemy. One of the tanks was blown up on a mine, resulting in four casualties In spite of these difficulties, the armoured column advanced nearly 20 km that day Resuming the advance on the morning of 18 March and brushing aside the minor opposition encountered, the armoured squadron with one company of 1 Rajput entered Jhangar at 1400 hours that day, being the first Indian troops to enter the town [6] For his skilful and intrepid leadership Lieut-Colonel Rajindar Singh, CO 7 Cavalry, was awarded Maha Vir Chakra.

Meanwhile 19 Brigade had been operating from area Gaikot Forest At 1300 hours on 18 March 1 Kumaon Rifles advanced and captured objectives north and west of Jhangar at 1600 hours No opposition was encountered On the right flank, 4 Dogra moved forward at 1030 hours on 18 March and captured village Pogla at 1700 hours, thus securing Jhangar from the right Later in the evening the battalion concentrated at Jhangar Dharamsal

With the recapture of Jhangar on 18 March 1948, the main land route leading into the Naushahra valley was secured and the enemy's supply line was disrupted Thus operation 'Vijay' ended in 'Vijay' i e. victory

ROLE OF THE ARTILLERY AND AIR

Artillery and the RIAF played important roles throughout the battle for Jhangar

The artillery available for operation 'Vijay' was two mountain batteries, one field battery, one troop 45 Field Battery and troop 37 Anti-Tank Battery, the latter to be used in mortar role As both the brigades were attacking simultaneously, one mountain battery and one field troop were allotted to each brigade, troop 45 Battery was left in Naushahra for local defence, but supported the advance of both the brigades up to its range limit. Due to the shortage of mules, mortar troop was allotted to 50 Para Bde on mechanical transport basis

Troop 45 Field Battery RIA was at call from both the brigades All guns could support either of the brigades if needed It was the heaviest concentration of fire-power seen in the J & K operations till then Troop of anti-tank guns was brought up on mules in 50 Para Bde concentration area and 5 Mountain Battery followed 19 Brigade over the hills, rest of the artillery stayed in the valley.

On 50 Para Brigade front, the main battle was at Pir Thil Nakka,

and it was the artillery chiefly that broke down the enemy resistance and paved the way for the capture of Pir Thil Nakka, followed by that of Jhangar Therefore, the part played by the artillery in the battle of Pir Thil Nakka deserves description in some detail

As already stated, on 15 March 3 (Para) Rajput, 1 Patiala and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry were concentrated in area Nothi Dhar in order to launch an attack on Pir Thil Nakka On the same day 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, with two Forward Observation Officers, was sent on offensive reconnaissance to locate enemy positions in the Pir Thil area As they were crossing open ground, one company was pinned down by heavy automatic, rifle and mortar fire Artillery fire was put down on enemy positions both from field and mountain batteries, and the company was saved. During this engagement which lasted ten hours, mountain guns fired 130 rounds and field guns fired 98 rounds

Enemy was holding the feature in strength, Brigadier Usman decided to launch a set piece attack on this feature on 16 March The operation was however postponed to 17 March in order to enable artillery to carefully register the enemy positions The General Officer Commanding (Major-General Kalwant Singh) placed all available artillery at the disposal of 50 Para Brigade

The task confronting the artillery was not an easy one Pir Thil was a very difficult feature, with steep slopes and cliffs in the north, north-east, east and south-east. Slopes on the other side (i e away from Indian troops) were comparatively gentle The highest point was on the north side and it sloped down towards the south-west It was thickly wooded All approaches to it from the Indian side were open and without any cover Enemy had covered all these approaches with his medium machine guns, light machine guns and 3-inch mortars Enemy defences were very strong and in depth and all along this feature His bunkers were strongly built, with sleeping places behind them.

On 16 March, targets were registered and deception plan was worked out in detail Enemy positions were harassed throughout the day and night by artillery, mortars, medium machine guns and snipers Mortars of 3 (Para) Rajput were superimposed for opportunity shoots. Visual Control Post was in position to direct aircraft on to the enemy positions Thus the stage was set for a big set piece attack on the strong enemy positions, sited on a most difficult feature.

At 0630 hours on 17 March, known enemy positions were engaged on the opposite flank with a view to deceiving the enemy From 0633 to 0650 hours all troops/batteries fired on objectives with a view to deceiving the enemy as to the actual place of attack

On 17 March (H-hour) concentrated fire was put down on 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry front for five minutes Four 3 7-inch howitzers, eight 25-pounders and 14 3-inch mortars blasted the enemy positions At 0706 hours, concentration was shifted from the objective of 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry to the objective of 1 Patiala towards the

south-west At 0713 hours, fire was shifted on to the reverse slopes, and guns were placed at the disposal of Forward Observation Officers, which afterwards took observed shots and inflicted heavy casualties on the fleeing enemy Infantry followed up the terrific artillery bombardment and captured their objectives easily, the hostiles being still quite stunned Targets were indicated to the RIAF, who chased the enemy for a considerable distance Pir Thil was captured and consolidated by 0800 hours It was mainly an artillery battle, but the close follow up by 1 Patiala and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry reflected much credit on the infantry

On 17 March, 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry followed up the success at Pir Thil and captured Susoloti Dhar One Forward Observation Officer accompanied them This high feature was again registered by artillery, including 5 Mountain Battery, which was firing across the valley Mortars protected their left flank Guns were ready to fire yet another concentration, but the enemy had enough of it on Pir Thil and he did not wait for another Only a few artillery rounds were fired on this feature 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry captured it without opposition 7 Mountain Battery fired 138 rounds and 30 Field Battery fired 290 rounds during the day

3 (Para) Rajput captured Pt 3477 by 0830 hours on 18 March They met opposition approximately 550 metres west of the position Forward Observation Officer called up the mountain guns and they were in action by 0930 hours from a place from where they could support up to Pt 3574 Field guns could not come forward due to the bad road

On 18 March, 1 Patiala attacked a high feature from where the enemy was sniping This attack was supported by artillery and mortar fire 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry went straight for Pt 3399 and 1 Patiala to high ground north of it, which overlooked Jhangar Both points were captured Both the battalions were supported by 7 Mountain Battery with one Forward Observation Officer each

At 1315 hours on 18 March mountain guns registered and engaged targets on Pt 3574 from where 2 automatics and about 25 rifles were firing on 1 Patiala. Gun-fire was put down and 1 Patiala on the right and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry on the left pounced on the prey Enemy fled in dismay By 1500 hours this feature was secured by 1 Patiala and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry

Artillery thus played a very important role in the battle of Jhangar Throughout the operations the massed guns were in action driving the enemy back, shattering their morale, and making it possible for the infantry to over-run the positions under cover of the deadly barrage.

The RIAF also harassed the enemy a good deal On 2 March 1948, village Sardot was attacked as indicated by Visual Control Post An enemy machine gun post, reported about 5 km north of Naushahra, was also attacked. Shan Da Mohra and Sadabad were attacked with rockets

On 4 March, houses in Jhangar were attacked with good results, as

confirmed by the Visual Control Post. Three raiders were seen entering a house in the neighbourhood of this locality. The house went ablaze after an air attack with rockets. Houses, given as targets by the indication of white smoke in Shan Da Mohra were attacked and set on fire. The Visual Control Post informed that at least fifty raiders were killed as a result of this attack. Near Darhal, eight raiders were killed while still taking up positions.

Heavy rain prevented the RIAF from bombing enemy targets till 13 March, when Samani and Sadabad were attacked. On 15 March enemy concentration, indicated with white smoke about 11 km west of Naushahra, was subjected to rocket attack. This position was again attacked later in the day when red smoke was thrown on it by our ground troops. Darhal Fort received a direct hit when bombed on instructions from the Visual Control Post. Several huts suspected to shelter raiders about 18 km north-west of Naushahra were attacked.

On 16 March, villages Pir Thil, Kathiala and Dhalli were attacked. Another enemy position near Dhalli was located and rocketed. Samani was bombed.

On 17 March village Jabrian was bombed and direct hits were scored. A hut nearby was also strafed. Enemy concentrations in Kathiala were attacked with bombs, registering direct hits. A small party of raiders driving cattle near this village received attention resulting in five being killed. Villages Uparla Sakiran and Uparla Karali were bombed on request of the ground forces. Kamila and Laroka were picked up as targets as indicated by the red smoke thrown on them by Indian ground troops These wide ranging, relentless air attacks definitely helped to demoralise the hostiles and contributed significantly to their defeat at Jhangar.

Notes

1 Gen Kalwant Singh has stated that he did not like the [illegible] village and [illegible] to Brig Usman
2 Lieut-Colonel Butalia was posthumously awarded Maha Vir [illegible]
3 It is claimed that this change was made at the instance of [illegible] (Western Command), and after a personal [illegible]
4 See comments of Maj Gen [illegible] this column formed part of [illegible]
5 On 13 March [illegible] and the rest of the battalion [illegible] company [illegible] the 19 Brigade HQ [illegible] the right flank of [illegible]
6 Gen [illegible] Jhangar.

CHAPTER IX

The Handwara Sector—Advance to Tithwal

(February-May 1948)

THREAT TO HANDWARA

While the Indian forces were securing Naushahra and recapturing Jhangar, important events were taking place in the Handwara-Tithwal sector It was in the first week of February 1948 that the enemy incursion from the west created a threat to Srinagar Not only was this threat met but the enemy was driven back from Handwara and even from Tithwal on the Kishanganga, across the Shamshabari range

It was on 7 February—in the middle of the winter—that the news of a 'mass' invasion of the valley from the west over Pharkian-ki-Gali reached Srinagar like a bolt from the blue According to this report, brought in by the remnants of a State Force picquet at Shulur, a large force of raiders numbering 'thousands' had that morning surprised the Kashmir Militia post at Trahagam and successfully persuaded them to change sides The brunt of the attack had then fallen on the small State Force garrison at Shulur, forcing them to abandon their post

The whole of Trahagam valley had thus passed into the hands of the raiders, and the way was now open for them to capture Handwara-Sopore and advance on to Srinagar The only troops available to meet this threat were 1 Sikh (less one company at Baramula), resting at Srinagar

Colonel Harbakhsh Singh, Officer Commanding, 1 Sikh, received orders from Brigade Headquarters at 2200 hours on 7 February, to move out at the earliest and 'deal with the threat' He was told that a troop of armoured cars of 7 Cavalry from Baramula would meet him at the road junction, 11 km from Baramula, in the early hours of the morning on 8 February They were, however, to be in support only.

The battalion was lined up to start just after 0100 hours on 8 February, and Col Harbakhsh Singh rode off in a jeep, ahead of the convoy, in order to make arrangements to meet the armoured cars at the road junction, and to find out from the locals the state of the road beyond Sopore, and any further information about the enemy

The first opportunity Col Harbakhsh Singh had of studying the map and thinking over a plan of action was in the jeep during the journey from Srinagar to Sopore He made the following plan of operations

(i) Battalion Rear was to be based at Sopore and was to be responsible for the security of the place

(ii) Battalion, with armoured cars in support was to advance beyond Sopore, tactically, and establish a firm base in the area Watawian where *Nala* Pohru comes nearest to the hill and forms a natural barrier for defence

(iii) Company less a platoon in MT, supported by a troop of armoured cars, was to send a patrol to Handwara to get as much information about the enemy as possible

The Battalion convoy from Srinagar arrived at the road junction at about 0400 hours on 8 February, and had to wait for the armoured cars, which did not arrive till 0600 hours. This time was, however, utilised in putting junior commanders in the picture and in explaining to them the outline plan of the operations. The armoured cars from Baramula having 'married up' at the road junction, Sopore was reached at 0700 hours Battalion Rear was left behind at Sopore and advance was resumed at 0800 hours The road beyond Sopore was under 30-60 cm of snow, and move on it could be carried out, therefore, only by 4×4 vehicles, and that too with anti-skid chains.

Messrs D.P Dhar and Nazir, representatives of the National Conference, accompanied the column as Civil Liaison Officers Mr Soofi, the National Conference representative at Sopore was contacted for information, but he seemed to have none beyond the rumours known at Srinagar

The advance to the firm base was uneventful and the base was secured by 1500 hours A patrol consisting of a company less one platoon and a troop of armoured cars set out from the firm base at 1530 hours for Handwara and returned at 1800 hours without incident. Handwara was found to be clear of enemy, though excitement and panic amongst the population was noticeable The Civil Liaison Officers, Messrs D.P Dhar and Nazir, stayed behind at Handwara to re-assure the local population and to watch further developments

Much against the wish of Col Harbakhsh Singh, the armoured cars, having completed their patrol to Handwara, returned to their base at Baramula for maintenance—a place at least four hours' distance from the firm base owing to snow.

The evening and night 8/9 February were utilised in strengthening the perimeter defence of the firm base, and a plan was made to send a strong patrol next morning in the direction of Wodhapur

At first light on 9 February, Messrs Dhar and Nazir brought the news that the enemy had occupied Handwara after last light on 8 February—a couple of hours after the Indian patrol had returned This news was to some extent welcome, as now the Indians knew where the enemy was and, instead of groping in the dark, they could accordingly deal with him The plan of operations as made out over-night was modified A company was despatched at once to secure the suspension bridge at Pt. 5220. It was appreciated that as soon as the enemy came to know of the presence of the Indian troops in the area he would try to

fact came to be only too true Just as the first Indian stop-party was getting on to the bridge north of the village, a batch of men was discerned disappearing in the darkness of the night The contact was so close that one of the enemy actually got hold of the arm of the JCO leading the Sikh party and adjoined him to run, shouting "enemy, enemy" It was no use opening fire So the Sikhs quickly took up position and silently awaited the arrival of some more enemy. None came Soon it was discovered that it was the tail of the escaping enemy that they had touched It was, therefore, decided to take up chase of the enemy along the road and to intercept him at Wodhapur, where the road and the track along which the enemy had escaped converged

The track ran almost parallel to the road to Wodhapur via the suspension bridge, and was separated from it by a wide *Nala* and a marshy ground then under deep snow The distance between the road and the track varied from 1350 to 2250 metres—outside the range of the small arms—and any move wide off the beaten path over the snow on the road was impossible At the first glimmer of dawn the Sikhs found themselves and the enemy running parallel to each other, both making for the vital objective—the bottleneck near Wodhapur The snow was deep and the going hard There was no transport available and everything, including 3-inch mortars and ammunition was being carried by the men The distance to the objective along the road was about three quarters of a km longer than along the track

The Sikhs would have won the race for the bottleneck if the armoured cars had arrived at the bridge as arranged Unfortunately they had not arrived at the bridge The result was that the hostiles won the race by a narrow margin Before the Indian troops could reach Wodhapur, his covering party had taken up positions in the houses overlooking the road and on the hills on both sides of the bottleneck By the time the Sikhs were able to dislodge the enemy after a spirited action, he had succeeded in covering his retreat without any major loss of life, except for a few wounded. As a result of this action, the enemy was, however, forced to abandon all heavy baggage and equipment, including a No. 62 wireless set with a generator, and some ammunition. He had been split into two parties—one retreating towards Magam and the other, the bigger of the two, towards Kopwara

It was about 1400 hours by now, and the Sikhs were too tired and hungry to keep up the chase that day, and in the absence of any snow-traction vehicle or porters, there was no possibility of the 'Administration' keeping up with the forward troops Even the armoured cars on which they had counted so much, and which could have played havoc with the enemy entrapped as he was, had failed them Col Harbakhsh Singh, therefore, decided to withdraw a major portion of the battalion back into the firm base for rest, with the intention of taking up the pursuit early next morning

The company at the bridge was detailed to carry out a search of the

Handwara village. A large dump of enemy heavy baggage and bedding, including rations, was recovered from the Tehsil A torn Pakistan flag flying on the building was also collected

After repeated appeals to Brigade Headquarters, a troop of armoured cars was sent to the support of the Sikhs sometimes towards the evening of that day—only 12 hours too late The crew felt sorry when they were told of the excellent opportunity they had missed. If they had arrived that morning, as arranged, they would have without any doubt destroyed or captured the whole of the enemy force and there would have been probably no "Handwara front", for some months to come

Col Harbakhsh Singh now made the following appreciation of the situation

(i) The enemy was a full battalion strong and the Sikhs were a battalion less a company—and a weak one at that, after the loss at Bhatgiran But the enemy was on the run, and had been split into two parties He had further lost practically all his heavy baggage and bedding—a very important factor in winter—and some of his reserve ammunition He had also lost a No 62 set, probably his only means of communication with home base—contributing no doubt towards his further demoralisation Indians had superiority in weapons also, as they had armoured cars and 3-inch mortars, which the enemy did not have Under these circumstances a certain amount of risk in taking up the chase would be justifiable, Col Harbakhsh Singh decided

(ii) A party of the enemy having withdrawn towards Magam, the establishment of a firm base at Wodhapur would be essential, in order to secure the L of C of the pursuing force against any threat from that direction

(iii) In the absence of any means of traction over deep snow, and owing to the non-availability of porters, it was not possible to move any rations with the pursuit party Recourse would have to be had, therefore, to local resources As for the blankets, they would have to be carried by the men themselves, at the scale of one each.

(iv) It would be necessary to have a 3-inch mortar and its ammunition with the pursuit party Some reserve small arms ammunition would also have to be man-handled

The pursuit was taken up early morning on 11 February by a force consisting of Battalion Tactical Headquarters and two companies supported by two armoured cars The third company was left behind to establish a firm base at Wodhapur, with a platoon to protect the suspension bridge Snow on the road was at least 75 cm deep, resulting in a very heavy going for the armoured cars The progress of the force was consequently slow Arampur was reached at about 1000 hours It

was found that the decking of the wooden bridge there had been dismantled. The enemy had not, however, had the time to damage the main structure. The decking was replaced with the help of local labour and the advance was resumed. To slow down the pursuit, the enemy had felled trees along the road. The clearing of these caused considerable delay, with the result that Darugmal, only about 6 km from Arampur, was not reached until 1600 hours Here one of the armoured cars got ditched, and it took over an hour and all available hands to get it back on to the road. There was now less than an hour's light at hand, and Harbakhsh Singh, therefore, decided to go into a bivouac there for the night. There had so far been no encounter with the enemy who, the locals reported, was fleeing only just ahead.

A report was received, just as the Sikhs were getting into a perimeter camp, that the enemy was engaged at that very moment in cutting down the bridge at Kopwara This was a very important bridge over a big, deep *Nala* and the securing of it intact was of vital importance for any further advance. A company was, therefore, despatched at once to capture the bridge This company moved in the dark at a record speed The bridge had already been set on fire before the company's arrival and was well covered by fire from light machine guns in a house on the opposite side. The company, however, secured the bridge and also managed to extinguish the fire That the enemy had suffered casualties could be seen from the trails of blood on snow next morning Indian casualty was one wounded.

The pursuit was resumed in the early hours on 12 February. In view of the damage to the bridge by fire, the armoured cars were left behind at Darugmal, with a platoon of infantry as close escort

Kopwara was found completely deserted The enemy, it was discovered, had retreated from the village in the middle of the night, leaving behind in haste some blankets and woollen shawls, apparently seized from the locals.

The chase was resumed without loss of time. Trahagam was reached without incident at about 1430 hours. Some dead bodies of local civilians (Kashmiri Pandits) including women and children were seen lying littered about on the roadside They had been shot by the enemy.

The going all along over deep snow had been hard, more so with the extra load that everyone was carrying A 3-inch mortar, its ammuition, and reserve small arms ammunition in addition to a great coat each were all carried on person. The blankets had been abandoned at Darugmal, to be sent later with local porters, if possible.

The enemy, it was reported, had only just evacuated Trahagam, taking all his wounded and sick with him He was stated to be thoroughly demoralised The Sikhs, however, had received orders from Brigade Headquarters to abandon the chase and return to base at once. So, in order to scare the enemy still further, a company pushed straight through to pursue him up to the village of Guglus while the remainder of

the force settled down in Trahagam for the night. The Sikhs were well received by the population of Trahagam, especially by the President of the local National Conference, who gave them assurance of the fullest co-operation from all The problem of procuring rations for the troops was solved by the capture of a large quantity of enemy supplies in the villages, including ground-nuts and almonds These latter were particularly welcome to the rather hungry troops and were consumed in quite an inordinate quantity This was supplemented by the issue of a chappati of maize each, prepared by using the shovel-blades as iron plates

Keeping warm at night was a real problem. Some of the picquets and sentries were right in the open They were given priority for great coats which only a proportion of the troops had The remainder had to be content with a roof shelter Firewood, however, was plentiful, and fire was kept burning in the rooms the whole night In spite of it nobody could have a wink of sleep on account of the intense cold According to Col Harbakhsh Singh, it was one of the most uncomfortable nights he had ever spent. The night was, however, quite uneventful, and everybody was up very early in the morning—looking out for the sun.

The agent sent after the enemy the evening before had not returned This looked suspicious. However, before withdrawing to the base as ordered by the Brigade Headquarters, Col Harbakhsh Singh decided to send a strong patrol up to Shulur so as to give the semblance of the pursuit being continued A platoon was left behind to hold the fort, so to say, at Trahagam, and the remainder of the force—(two companies less a platoon)—plus the Gorkha platoon, and a 3-inch mortar moved out at 0700 hours on 13 February towards Shulur. A firm base was established on a ridge, a km and a half short of Guglus, and a company plus the Gorkha platoon were despatched forward to carry out 'reconnaissance in force' The company was to advance along the main track taking Trahagam ridge in its stride, and the Gorkha platoon was to take the side track to Shulur, taking off the main track just short of Guglus.

No sooner had the Gorkha platoon branched off to the left than the company on the main track came under very close range heavy fire from the ridge and from the village At the same time, a party of about 50 enemy tried to charge from behind a hedge about 45 metres to their left, with loud shouts of 'Ya Ali' As luck would have it, the charging enemy, while they were wading through knee deep snow, came under close range enfilade fire of the Gorkha platoon, whom they had not spotted This enemy party was nearly wiped out Not less than 40 were killed or wounded in front of the Gorkha platoon position Very few managed to escape The company fought a spirited action, supported by the 3-inch mortar from the firm base behind, and drove the enemy out of the village In this action the company lost one NCO killed Then the

forward troops withdrew to Wodhapur without further incident.

On 14 February some regrouping of the force took place. Two companies were at Wodhapur, while in the area of the suspension bridge near Handwara were concentrated Battalion Tactical Headquarters, one company Gorkha platoon and a troop of armoured cars. Towards the evening a party of the enemy was reported to have arrived back at Darugmal, obviously encouraged by the withdrawal from Trahagam

Owing to inclement weather, operations were confined mostly to reconnaissance and fighting patrols in the direction of Darugmal and Magam No serious engagement with the enemy, however, took place. A section of 25 pounders had arrived and the guns were placed in position at Wodhapur. It was decided on 19 February to carry out a night advance and surround Darugmal by first light the next day The night operation was carried out as planned, but only to find that there was no enemy at Darugmal. A firm base was established there and a company patrol was sent to Kopwara The patrol reported Kopwara clear of enemy Kopwara was secured at 0730 hours on 21 February, and C company 7 Sikh, which had joined the Battalion a day earlier, was established there During his withdrawal from Darugmal the enemy had destroyed all bridges, big or small, on the road to Kopwara.

The next day was spent in local patrolling all over the area from Wodhapur to Kopwara No enemy was encountered. A section of 25 pounders was now moved from Wodhapur to Darugmal.

At 0530 hours on 23 February, just before first light, a party of enemy about 300 strong, mostly locals, attacked a picquet at Kopwara manned by C company of 7 Sikh. The enemy had approached under cover within 45 metres of the picquet position on three sides, with a Bren group as near as 22 metres from one of the posts. Repeated assaults by the enemy were thrown back until the break of dawn, when the timely arrival of reinforcements forced the enemy to withdraw, leaving behind three dead on the ground alongwith a large quantity of ammunition. The inspection of the ground revealed many trails of blood of the wounded and killed dragged away by the hostiles on the soft snow. In this action the 3-inch mortar detachment with the picquet was obliged to fire at a range of 135 metres from its position, and lent valuable support in repelling the attack.

OPERATIONS IN SHULUR-SONAMUL AREA

On 25-27 February, 1 Sikh was relieved by 7 Sikh. One company of 1 Sikh was, however, detained in the area as reinforcement for 7 Sikh. The rest of the battalion withdrew to Srinagar. Another company of the 1 Sikh battalion was still at Baramula under 161 Infantry Brigade.

The disposition of 7 Sikh, wi [illegible] command one company of

1 Sikh, a troop armd cars and one section of 25 pounder guns, was roughly as follows

Battalion Headquarter and two companies —Kopwara
Company less one platoon and a section of field guns —Darugmal
One platoon —Wodhapur
One company —Handwara
Company 1 Sikh (reserve) and a troop of armoured cars —Handwara bridge

The cold and snow reduced the activity of these troops to local patrolling for some time This rather passive policy encouraged the enemy to spread out and come closer and closer to the forward Indian posts The sniping of Kopwara became a daily occurrence Patrols issuing out from Handwara also reported increased activity on the part of the enemy On 5 March the commander of the company of 7 Sikh at Handwara, whilst on a patrol, was seriously wounded in a sharp engagement near the village of Bakihakar within 3 km of Handwara The patrol asked for reinforcements. Two platoons were sent from Handwara and the patrol was safely extricated

During the period 6-21 March, heavy snowfall on the Kopwara front made intensive patrolling difficult The road from Wodhapur to Darugmal was not motorable due to heavy snow. Rations and stores for the garrison beyond Wodhapur (i e. Darugmal and Kopwara) were carried by coolies and ponies The engineers were busy in repairing the road Wodhapur-Kopwara

As Kopwara continued to come in for a lot of attention from the enemy, whose base of operation was reported to be Trahagam, Lt-Colonel Mathura Singh, Officer Commanding, 7 Sikh, decided to liquidate this base after a night advance At 0300 hours on 22 March a force consisting of A and B companies plus two platoons C company 7 Sikh under command Lt-Colonel Mathura Singh left Kopwara with the intention of capturing Pethahir, preliminary to the capture of Shulur On nearing Pethahir, the force was heavily fired upon by the enemy entrenched in the village After two hours' hard fighting Pethahir was captured The enemy suffered heavy casualties—2 officers and 46 ORs counted dead, and 6 ORs taken prisoners One light machine gun, thirty-one rifles and a pistol were captured Indian casualties were 1 killed and 5 wounded A permanent garrison of five platoons was established at Pethahir.

Following this success, Tactical Headquarters of 7 Sikh was moved from Darugmal to Kopwara A section of 25 pounders also moved to Kopwara One company 1 Sikh was established on 27 March at Khaipur forward of the Bakihakar area. On 29 March, 25 pounders moved from Kopwara to Pethahir in order to take part in the operation for the capture of Shulur. In the morning on 30 March, A company plus two platoons C company 7 Sikh captured Shulur and a permanent garrison

was established there. The disposition of 7 Sikh at this time was·

Shulur —Five platoons (A company plus 2 platoons C company) and one section 3-inch mortars

Pethahir —Four platoons, two 25 pounders and Tactical Headquarters (B company plus defence platoon).

Kopwara —D company, one section 3-inch mortar and a detachment of engineers

Wodhapur —One platoon (J&K State Force)

Handwara bridge —One platoon 1 Sikh and one A/C.

Handwara —Two platoons, one section 3-inch mortars and a platoon of engineers

Khaipur —One company (1 Sikh) and a section of 3-inch mortars

During the period 1–7 April, normal patrolling was carried out Engineers started working on the road and bridges between Kopwara and Shulur. Most of these bridges had been destroyed by the enemy before withdrawing for Trahagam During the period, several enemy messages asking for reinforcements were intercepted. Eventually on 6 April enemy was reinforced by approximately 300 armed men, who came through Pharkian-ki-Gali On 9 April information was received that enemy reinforcements were in village Panzgam Commanding Officer 7 Sikh, therefore, decided to send a patrol to Panzgam The patrol from Shulur (a company strong with one detachment 3-inch mortars) started at 0630 hours on 10 April for Panzgam via Taratpura When the patrol reached Taratpura it was fired upon heavily from three directions Meanwhile another strong enemy detachment attacked the main camp at Shulur. The garrison left in Shulur (2 platoons C company and a detachment of 3-inch mortars) asked for help Two platoons of B company from Pethahir were sent as reinforcement The patrol at Taratpura extricated itself and managed to return to Shulur camp by 1200 hours In the meantime reinforcements also arrived from Pethahir. Thereupon a counter-attack was put in at enemy positions in area of village Kalmona The enemy fled, leaving 12 dead bodies and one rifle behind The enemy strength was not less than 600 His casualties in the whole engagement were 42 counted dead. Indian casualties were 4 killed and 2 wounded A permanent garrison one company strong (1 Sikh) was established at Sonamul to act as a support to Shulur

The front of 7 Sikh having thus extended, Headquarters 1 Sikh and the only company with it at Srinagar, was ordered out to Handwara. The second company at Srinagar had been already despatched to 161 Infantry Brigade area. On 12 April, Colonel Harbakhsh Singh took over the Handwara area The Handwara-Kopwara area was now divided into two sectors between 1 Sikh and 7 Sikh. The company of 1 Sikh which

had been attached to 7 Sikh, now reverted to its own battalion 1 Sikh less two companies with under command section field guns were roughly disposed as follows

Battalion Headquarters Company less two platoons One platoon State Force Section field guns	—Handwara
One platoon	—Nagi picquet
One platoon	—Wodhapur
One company	—Lachh

1 Sikh from their post at Lachh were in patrolling-touch with the company at Panzul The latter informed them one morning of having chased a party of enemy in the direction of Lachh The post at Lachh was, therefore, all ready to receive them In the evening an agent reported that the enemy had just passed through Naugam and was proposing to spend the night at Mankal Company less a platoon (left behind) from Lachh was detailed to carry out a night march and surround the enemy in the village by first light A guide was procured Mr Nazir decided to accompany the troops on this mission Hopes were high and everyone was certain of a big bag

The elements, however, intervened Punctually at start time (midnight) a violent rain storm broke in the area and raged throughout the night And to cap it, the guide lost his way and decided to take a short cut through a steep *Nala* The night was pitch dark and the ground extremely slippery, causing delay The objective was reached an hour after first light, but only to discover, from an old man in the village, that the enemy had left just half an hour before!

For this operation, Col Harbakhsh Singh had moved his Tactical Headquarters to Lachh and had followed the fortunes of the patrol on the wireless set Just as he heard of the bad luck they had had, an agent came with a report that another enemy party were having their meals in the village of Naugam, and that they too were bound for Mankal Col Harbakhsh Singh passed on this information to the patrol and told it to lay an ambush for this party To hasten matters, he sent a detachment of mortars from the Lachh post about a km to a flank to fire a few bombs into the village to scare the raiders into hurried flight This trick worked and the enemy were soon on their way into what looked like the 'Jaws of Death'

The patrol had already informed Col Harbakhsh Singh that it was ready to receive the enemy, and a running commentary of the action was arranged with the wireless operator at the other end The enemy was last reported walking 'right in' only 270 metres from the ambush when luck again intervened. A local, upon being suddenly challenged by the 'stop' behind the ambush, got hysterically frightened and ran down the hill through the jungle, shrieking on the top of his voice There was no way of stopping him Shooting would not have helped The raiders

hearing his cries grew suspicious and fled into the jungle The patrol chased them, but they managed to escape The troops returned to Lachh in the evening tired, hungry and soaked to their skin, and what was worse, despondent at their extremely bad luck! They might have, however, found some consolation from the report that this enemy party having been mortally scared that day had resolved to take, against all counsels, the most hazardous escape route over Bod Bangas via Bangas Gali and perished to the last man in a storm of hail and lightning, a phenomenon for which Bod Bangas was notorious This report was later confirmed by government sources

Enemy was, however, becoming more aggressive on the Kopwara front With the whole of Trahagam ridge in enemy hands, the position held by 7 Sikh company below it at Shulur was tactically an unsound one It was constantly under small arms fire from higher ground, and its L of C to Pethahir, running as it did along the foot of Trahagam ridge, was always threatened. The provisioning of Shulur was consequently becoming increasingly difficult and costly in lives It entailed each time a full-fledged operation by at least a company supported by field guns and weapon carriers One company of 7 Sikh while on such a mission was once very seriously engaged by the enemy, who succeeded in destroying or looting most of the pony-convoy of supplies escorted by this company It was with great difficulty that the company managed to make their way into Shulur The hostiles followed up this success by completely investing the Shulur garrison On 23 April an attempt was made to send rations and ammunition to the Shulur garrison Due to heavy opposition, however, the L of C could not be opened. Next day enemy infiltrated along the hills through the jungle towards Kopwara, and as the Indian garrisons were too much spread out, he succeeded in cutting off each one from the other It was therefore decided to clear Trahagam Hill and drive out the enemy, in order to relieve the hard pressed Shulur garrison Headquarters 163 Brigade forwarded two additional companies (1 Sikh and 2 Bihar) for this task

The plan roughly was as follows:

(i) A force of two companies was to carry out an enveloping night advance on to the highest point on Trahagam ridge, which was known to be strongly held, and after securing it by first light to press down along the ridge towards Shulur.

(ii) Another company supported by a troop of armoured cars and a section of weapon carriers was to advance along the road at first light

(iii) Company 1 Sikh at Sonamul, supported by a section of weapon carriers was to demonstrate from the flank

(iv) Shulur garrison was to move out and meet the thrust along the road as far forward as possible.

(v) Section field guns at Pethahir was to support the operation throughout.

the picquets. His attempt was, however, foiled by close range enfilade fire from a neighbouring picquet He attempted twice again from different directions, and each time he was repulsed with heavy losses The guns from Pethahir also brought their fire to bear on the targets in the area, and thus lent invaluable support

Another mishap happened to the vehicle convoy when one of the bridges collapsed under the weight of a weapon carrier The other carrier when yoked to pull it out had its track come off The ditched carrier was in the end winched out with a Dodge, helped by all available hands What took time was the making of a diversion for the remainder of the vehicles to pass

It was not until 1530 hours that the convoy reached Magam and orders were issued to the escort to withdraw The enemy attempted only half-hearted pursuit, presumably due to the losses already suffered by him The withdrawal was completed by 1700 hours and a company post established at Magam

The enemy took the withdrawal from Shulur and Taratpura as a sign of weakness and started encroaching more and more The sniping of forward posts at Nagi picquet, Magam and Pethahir became a daily routine The hostiles burnt all the bridges on Trahagam road beyond Pethahir and some two bridges even this side of it Contact with Pethahir post could not be established without first opening the road by force The place was showing signs of turning into another Shulur, when the summer offensive commenced in May

COMMAND REORGANISATION AND NEW PLANS

With the opening of Handwara front and the arrival of 7 Sikh in the valley, a newly raised Bde HQ called 'Z' Bde under Brig Lakhinder Singh, was sent up to Srinagar in the second week of February to take charge of the operation in the valley and Ladakh area, i.e., Handwara-Bandipur-Skardu-Leh This HQ was stationed in Srinagar and was later named as HQ 163 Inf Bde, with the following Inf units under command

1 Sikh
7 Sikh
1 Bihar
7 Kashmir Infantry

and State Force garrisons manning the various posts in Ladakh

Upon Brig Lakhinder Singh's promotion to Major-General, the command of the brigade was taken over by Brig J.C Katoch, on 22 March '48.

Headquarters J & K Force (JAK Force) was responsible for operations in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir. Owing to the vastness of the territory involved, it was appreciated that effective control by one commander by himself was not practicable. It was, therefore, decided to form two Divisional Headquarters, Srinagar (Sri) and Jammu Divisions,

directly under Western Command, with an L of C Sub Area which was responsible for the administration of the communication zone and for stocking of the area The Pir Panjal Range along the line Banihal Pass, the Pir Panjal Pass, and the Haji Pir Pass was made the general line dividing the two divisions Punch was, however, inclusive to Srinagar Division Later in August 1948, it was placed under Jammu Division

Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh, the erstwhile commander of JAK Force, was appointed CGS at Army HQ The command of Jammu and Sri divisions was given to Maj-Gen Atma Singh and Maj-Gen K S Thimayya respectively Gen Thimayya arrived in Srinagar with his HQ on 4 May 48, Gen Kalwant Singh having left on 1 May 1948 The L of C Sub Area was under Brig Jai Singh

With the opening of the Banihal Pass after the winter freeze some reinforcements were also sent into the Valley 77 Para Brigade under Brig Nair arrived on 5 May '48 along with some field arty units, anti-tank units and other ancillary units to make up the complement of a Division.

Major-General Thimayya, GOC Sri Div, received the following directive from HQ Western Command

(a) *Task in general*—To capture Domel and prevent enemy invasion from Pakistan

(b) *Task in particular*—(i) To ensure complete security of Srinagar, (ii) to continue to hold essential outposts at Uri, Baramula, Handwara, Skardu, Leh and Kargil and (iii) to secure at all times the administrative communications in the garrisons in (ii) above

GOC Sri Div appreciated that he could carry out the tasks given to him by (i) withdrawing all troops beyond Kargil, (ii) capturing Gurais and (iii) advancing on Muzaffarabad and Domel with two brigades

With this aim in view, GOC Sri Div reorganised his forces in the Uri-Handwara area The plan was for 161 Inf Bde on the left to capture Chinari, Garhi and Domel and for 163 Inf Bde on the right to capture Tithwal D day was 20/21 May. 77 Para Bde was to be in reserve to hold a firm base at Uri Punch Brigade was to carry out a battalion operation in the direction of Bagh with a view to preventing the enemy from withdrawing forces from this area for reinforcing the defences along the road Uri-Domel

At the Divisional Commander's conference on 13 May 1948, General Thimayya, gave out in outlines his ideas on the proposed summer offensive, i e , what he was out to achieve and how he hoped to do it His main thrust was to go along the Uri-Domel road and he proposed to relieve for the purpose 161 Infantry Brigade which had been in the area from the very beginning of the campaign under Brigadier Sen. 161 Inf Bde's commitments were to be taken over by the newly arrived 77 Para Brigade. Prior to the main thrust, 163 Infantry Brigade in Handwara area was to carry out a diversionary push in the

direction of Tithwal, in order to draw as much of the enemy reinforcements in Muzaffarabad as possible There was to be 2–3 days' interval between the start of the two operations

Brigadiers Sen (161 Brigade) and Nair (77 Para Brigade) and Col Harbakhsh Singh, representing Brigadier Katoch (163 Bde) who was ill, and all available commanding officers of battalions taking part in the summer offensive, were taken for an air reconnaissance over the area in a Dakota sometime in the second week of May The aircraft flew along the main Srinagar-Domel road and returned via Tithwal-Handwara This reconnaissance gave the commanding officers a very good idea of the ground over which they were to operate

Before the formation of Sri Div, 163 Infantry Brigade, it will be remembered, was in charge of the operations in area Handwara-Bandipur-Ladakh In view of the impending operations, Bandipur and Ladakh sectors were taken over by Headquarters Sri Div This left only two battalions under 163 Brigade—in Handwara-Kopwara area—namely 1 Sikh and 7 Sikh 7 Sikh were exchanged with 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles from 161 Brigade about 10 May, and 1 Madras joined the Brigade at Handwara on 15 May, only two days prior to D day In May Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh took over command of 163 Brigade officially from Brigadier Katoch, who was indisposed

77 Para Brigade was detailed to take over all existing commitments of 161 Infantry Brigade by 13 May 1948

Having been thus relieved by 77 Para Brigade, 161 Infantry Brigade was to concentrate in Uri area, preparatory to the impending offensive

The D day for the diversionary push by 163 Infantry Brigade was fixed as 18 May, and for the main thrust by 161 Infantry Brigade along the Uri-Domel road as 20 May

PREPARATIONS FOR THE TITHWAL OFFENSIVE

The enemy on the Handwara front was estimated to be about 6150 strong—a mixture of Swatis, Mahsuds, locals and Pakistan Army personnel The enemy force was distributed roughly into two sectors—Trahagam and Handwara, with Sector Headquarters at Panzgam and Dogarpur respectively A small portion of the force was engaged in protecting the line of communication, which lay along the track via Nastachhun Pass to Tithwal There was an alternative but longer route via Pharkian-ki-Gali and Keran Tithwal was the main supply base and Chowkibal and Panzgam were the forward bases

As regards the Indian troops, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles and 1 Sikh were occupying the Kopwara and Handwara sectors respectively 1 Madras was expected to join the Brigade on 15 May 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles less two companies was at Kopwara, one company was at Pethahir and another company, supported by section field guns and platoon engineers, was at Darugmal 1 Sikh less two companies and two platoons, supported by section field guns and detachment engineers was at

Handwara, one company was at Magam and another company at Lachh, while Nagi picquet i e Pt. 6048 and Wodhapur were each held by a platoon

An 'appreciation' of the situation by Commander 163 Infantry Brigade was submitted to Divisional Headquarters on 5 May 1948 Its salient points were

(a) **Enemy Characteristics**

The enemy avoided pitched battles He was very nervous about his rear i e a threat to cut off his line of communication Like most irregulars, he was rather lax in his defence arrangements at night The whole plan of operations was mainly based on these characteristics of the enemy The object was to surround the enemy by surprise and cut his line of communication

(b) **Relative Strength**

For an irregular enemy the strength of 6150, as estimated in the area, was quite considerable The enemy was, however, scattered in small parties and, provided a complete surprise was obtained, he was not expected to put up an organised or concerted opposition Once he was on the run, it was the speed and not the strength with which he was pursued that would matter At least three battalions would be required to hold Tithwal and secure its immediate rear against any thrust that might be made from the direction of Muzaffarabad Another battalion would be required to guard the north flank and protect the 64 km line of communication. Thus four battalions would be required to carry out the operation.

(c) **Ground and Surprise**

To achieve surprise, the plan was to take the most difficult, and by the enemy the least expected, route for the main advance Use of the hours of darkness was expected to make success doubly sure There was also to be a weak thrust along the main Trahagam track in order to lure the enemy to stick on to his position and be thus entrapped.

(d) **Maintenance**

The difficulty of terrain and long line of communication required pack transport and self-sufficiency in all respects for a week

(e) **Additional Troops**

The following additional troops were required for the operation

(a) Under Command—
One infantry battalion

Citizens Prepare for Self-Defence The Maharani of Kashmir looking on as girls in Jammu learn rifle shooting

Welcome to the Indian F[illegible] serving tea and sweets at a forward

An Army doctor attending civilian patients in Kashmir

Sardar Patel and Shri Baldev Singh talking to a wounded jawan at the Jammu Hospital



Jawans and civilians clearing the Jammu-Srinagar road after a heavy snowfall

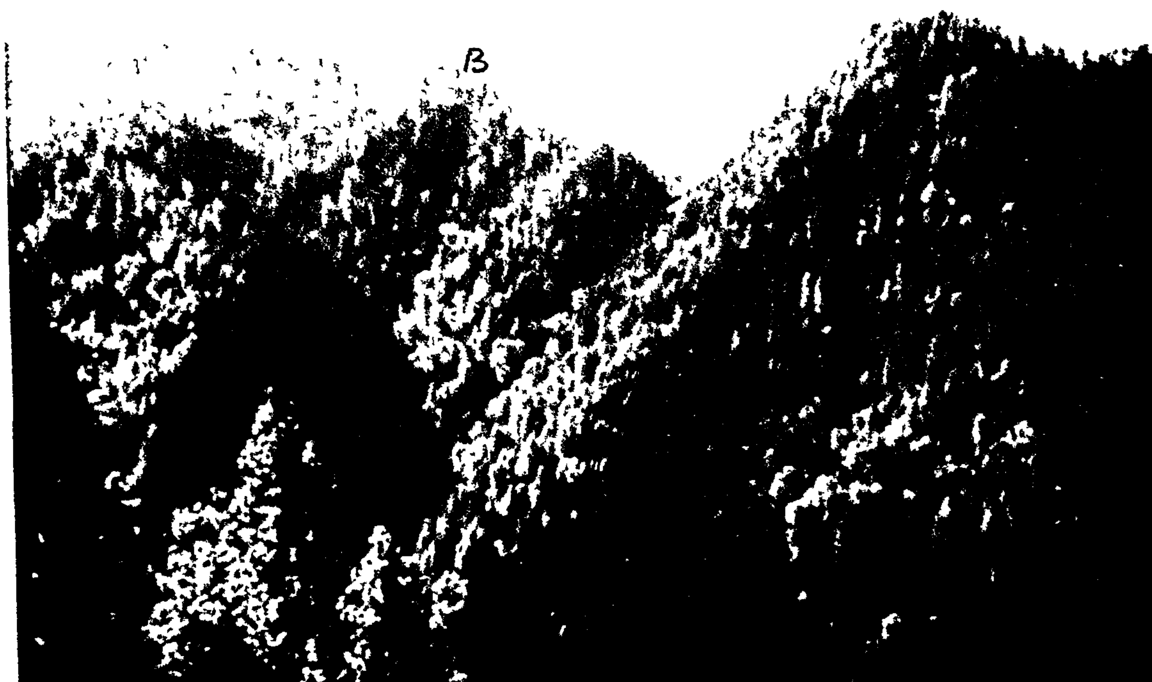


Pandit Nehru's visit to Srinagar 10 May 1948 Maj-Gen Thimayya behind him

[illegible] by Indian Engineers at Beri Pattan

An armoured car on the road to Uri

Jawans in action in the Tithwal sector



Richhmar Gali near Tithwal L/NK Karam Singh won his PVC defending the feature marked 'B' from a big enemy attack from higher hill 'A'

Bay[illegible] [illegible] raiders in a village in the Tithwal area

Some raiders come out with their hands up, while others lie dead in the background

Pakistani soldiers killed in their trenches after an Indian assault

Pakistani ammunition captured in the Naushahra sector

RIAF Dakota evacuates casualties and terrified Muslim ladies from Punch



A Tempest being armed with rockets for an attack mission

One battalion J & K Militia
One mountain battery

(b) In Support—
A squadron 7 Cavalry
31 Field Battery RIA
433 Field Company RIE

A squadron of Spitfires, operating from Jammu was also required to assist this important advance The infantry battalion could not, however, be made available for the operation owing to unexpected commitments elsewhere, thus limiting the objective to Chowkibal instead of Tithwal

After being relieved, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles and 1 Sikh were to concentrate in assembly areas by evening D minus 1 Two companies 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles were to concentrate at Kopwara, and the rest of the battalion, supported by two troops armoured cars, one troop field battery and detachment engineers, was to concentrate at Kopwara and move to Pethahir at night before D day. 1 Sikh and 1 Madras, less one company supported by 1 J & K Mountain Battery, were to concentrate at a *Nala* nearby during the previous night

For reasons of secrecy, all moves as far as possible were to be carried out in the dark without vehicle lights. Further, troops waiting in the assembly area during daylight were to lie low and avoid observation by enemy

1 Madras and some elements of 1 J & K Militia Battalion arrived at Handwara on the evening of 15 May Relief programme was completed by the morning of 16 May. The next night was utilized in regrouping and concentrating in assembly areas Ponies and porters which had been requisitioned, for reasons of secrecy mostly from Sopore area—32 km away—were brought into Handwara during night 16/17 May and kept there hidden and secluded in a closely guarded labour camp

Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh issued verbal orders at Handwara on the morning of 16 May for the operations The orders were given on a sand model and officers down to platoon commanders level were present The sand model was made available to unit commanders on a timed programme for their verbal orders Instructions were issued for briefing to be carried out on the model right down to the sepoy.

THE ADVANCE TO TRAHAGAM AND PANZGAM

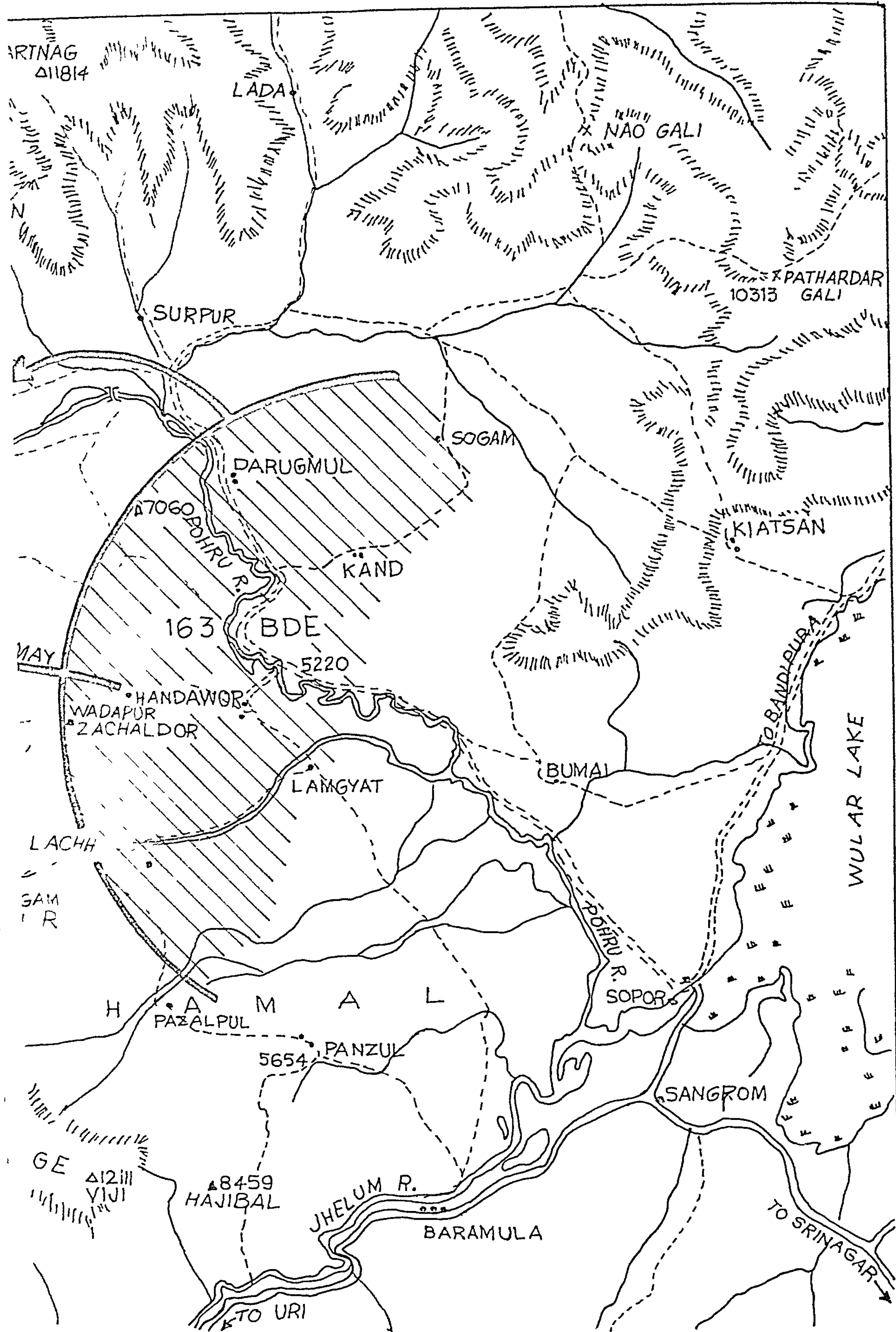
In view of the distance involved for the night advance, the Handwara column started half an hour before last light, i e , at 1830 hours on 17 May (D minus 1) After the column left for the Dogarpur ridge, Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh drove in his jeep to the Nagi picquet, where his Tactical Headquarters was established by 1900 hours Col Kaul, Commander J & K Militia, had come over to watch the progress of the operations during the night and accompanied Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh to the Nagi picquet This picquet was heavily sniped from a small

feature 450 metres to the east. It did not, however, worry the picquet, nor did it in any way interfere with the advance of the column on the road below, of which the enemy was not aware The enemy taken completely by surprise, fled in confusion in small parties without offering any resistance 1 Madras successfully carried out its task of securing the Dogarpur ridge after mid-day on the 18th The search of Dogarpur village revealed signs of a hasty withdrawal by the enemy.

1 Sikh now passed through 1 Madras and found their way to the objective, the river Kahmil, completely devoid of tracks and the going across country, over a series of ridges and *Nalas*, most difficult Only a couple of small enemy parties were encountered on the way and suitably dealt with

Two fighter aircraft of the RIAF came over the area at about 0930 hrs on 18 May and engaged parties of enemy withdrawing from Shulur valley and trying to escape towards Pharkian-ki-Gali Much use of air could not, however, be made owing to the absence of Contact Car Air which, although promised before the start of the operation, did not turn up until after D day The aircraft paid another visit to the area in the afternoon but to little avail

While the Handwara column secured the Dogarpur ridge, the Kopwara column was less fortunate and was ambushed by the enemy. The 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles two companies column, bound for the feature behind Trahagam ridge, which was scheduled to leave Kopwara at 2300 hours was delayed in its start by an hour owing to the dereliction of the civilian guide Their route lay across country along a *Nala* The column having been delayed by an hour in its start from Kopwara and finding the going across country much more difficult than expected, found itself at first light, when they should have been on the objective, still about a km and a half short of it Realising that they were much behind time they tried to rush headlong on to the objective, taking a short-cut through the village of Guglus without first searching it, and literally "woke-up" the enemy who happened to be residing there. The enemy allowed the first wave to go through unmolested and more or less ambushed the second wave inside the village, and simultaneously opened up from behind on the first wave, which was now climbing on to its objective on the ridge This did not, however, deter the first wave which continued to press on, if anything, at a faster pace A section of enemy MMGs now opened up on them at close range from a flank, taking them in enfilade and causing heavy casualties, including their commander, Captain Kang, in the first few bursts The fire was so effective that it restricted all movement and the advance to the objective was completely held up It was a great pity, for the objective was only a short distance away and there was not a soul on it at the time Meanwhile the Garhwalis down in the village fought gallantly and drove the enemy out of the houses But enemy reinforcements had by now arrived and taken up positions all round the village The ridge had also been occupied by



ARTNAG
11814
LADA
NAO GALI
PATHARDAR GALI
10313
SURPUR
SOGAM
DARUGMUL
7060
POHRU R.
KAND
KIATSAN
163 BDE
5220
HANDAWOR
WADAPUR
ZACHALDOR
LAMGYAT
BUMAI
TO BANDIPURA
WULAR LAKE
LACHH
POHRU R.
SOPOR
H A M A L
PAZALPUL
PANZUL
5654
SANGROM
GE
12111
VIJI
8459
HAJIBAL
JHELUM R.
BARAMULA
TO SRINAGAR
TO URI

the enemy. The commander of the column, therefore, decided to withdraw all troops and casualties into the village and take up a perimeter defence around it.'

Enemy made many attempts to rush their position The Garhwalis, however, fought back gallantly and held out against overwhelming odds until they were contacted by the forward elements of the thrust along the main road In this action the column had lost 8 killed and 14 wounded, including the commander

Although the column failed in capturing the objective assigned to it, the presence of this force behind the enemy position without doubt contributed a great deal in turning the enemy out of his very strong defensive position on Trahagam ridge.

A company of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles supported by two troops of armoured cars and a section of weapon carriers commenced their push from Pethahir along Trahagam road, at first light on D day (18 May) under the direct command of their Commanding Officer, Lt-Col Kuman Singh Pethahir had been more or less in a state of investment for sometime, with the enemy positions very close all round A very stiff opposition was, therefore, encountered from the very start. The enemy was in well dug positions and every inch of ground had to be fought for. Progress was consequently slow It was further retarded by the necessity of making diversions at all the bridges on the road which had been destroyed by the enemy

The guns in position at Pethahir came in for much plastering by enemy mortars. In spite of this very accurate fire, the crew of the guns lent most consistent, effective and valuable support throughout the operations

The Garhwalis pressed on against stiffening opposition with great determination The knowledge of their night column having been surrounded by the enemy egged them on to many an act of collective and individual gallantry in neutralising the enemy opposition post by post The feature overlooking Trahagam was captured by them just after mid-day This completely broke up the enemy defence on the ridge Further advance was carried out without much opposition and contact with beleaguered companies at Guglus was established at about 1500 hours By 1830 hours that evening all casualties had been attended to and evacuated, and a company established at Trahagam ridge as firm base. The remainder of the troops and armoured cars withdrew to Pethahir for the night.

Phase II of the operation aimed at blocking of the two exits from the Shulur valley and elimination of enemy base at Panzgam commenced on the morning of 19 May. A column consisting of two troops armoured cars, a section of weapon carriers and a platoon of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles and the Brigade Tactical Headquarters set out from Pethahir at 0800 hours on 19 May. The first part of the advance lay along Trahagam road running along the bottom of the ridge, which was now in own

hands Shumanag bridge was found to be completely destroyed by the enemy There was a fairly deep and fast stream flowing through the *Nala* and the making of a diversion through it took nearly three hours to complete, with all the engineer resources and spare hands available, and another hour for all the vehicles to pass through Advance was resumed at about 1300 hours Shulur position was found deserted except for an old man who upon arrival of the column tried to escape He was captured and turned out to be an enemy agent, presumably left there to watch movements of the Indian troops Advance was kept up along the road to Panzgam. Progress was rather slow owing to the road being narrow and bridges weak, and due to the fact that all villages and houses on the way had to be searched A 3-inch mortar with a lot of ammunition and large stocks of small arms ammunition and signal stores were captured from a house in Shulur village

As the column approached Panzgam, a number of small enemy parties were seen fleeing over the ridge behind the village, and were effectively shot up by the armoured cars The enemy made no serious attempt to interfere with the advance, except for a certain amount of sniping from the ridge on the right flank Panzgam was reached at 1600 hours and was found completely deserted Another dump of enemy supplies was captured in a house in the village Contact with 1 Sikh from the other direction was established at 1700 hours, and the valley of Shulur was now completely surrounded, although unfortunately most of the hostiles had already managed to escape They were, however, reported to be completely disorganised and fleeing in great disorder Their force was split into two—some escaping via Pharkian-ki-Gali to Keran and others via Kahmil river and Nastachhun Pass to Tithwal.

Having established a picquet on the ridge overlooking Panzgam, the column returned to base at Pethahir after last light that evening

PUSH ACROSS NASTACHHUN PASS TO TITHWAL

Chowkibal was captured by 1 Sikh at 1000 hours on 20 May, and 1 Madras passed through on their advance to Nastachhun Pass, closely followed by 1 Sikh in reserve.

3 Royal Garhwal Rifles, who had borne the brunt of the fighting so far, were left behind with two troops of armoured cars and a troop of field guns, to protect the line of communication against any counter-attack by the enemy from the direction of Pharkian-ki-Gali

A firm base was established at Chowkibal and the Brigade Administrative area moved there by the evening

At about 1600 hours, near Drangiyari, the forward elements of 1 Madras advancing towards Nastachhun Pass noticed a suspicious looking individual in civil clothes lurking in the vicinity and captured him. Although the civilian denied at the time any connection with or knowledge of the hostiles, the advance beyond this point was carried out with extra caution About a km and a half beyond, where the track ran

through a very steep re-entrant, a party of the enemy came out of their cover and challenged the forward section of the Madrasis, presumably taking them to be their own troops. The Madrasis shot four of them dead, including an officer, before they could either run away or take cover. Upon this the jittery enemy, who were waiting in an ambush on top of the re-entrant, also opened up and thus gave away their hidden position. The shrewd Madrasis, realising it to be an ideal ambush area, had already taken the precaution of sending parties up the spurs on both sides of the re-entrant Noticing these parties advancing on him from flanks, the enemy beat a hasty retreat

It was now getting dark and 1 Madras, therefore, bivouacked for the night in the area, about 5 km short of Nastachhun Pass 1 Sikh who were following them rested for the night in Drangiyari area, 3 km behind 1 Madras

The enemy was expected to make a stand on Nastachhun Pass which lent itself excellently to defence If this should happen, field artillery support for an attack on such a naturally strong defensive position, it was felt, would be essential. Rough calculation on the map revealed that Chowkibal, which was the farthest the field guns could move, was just outside the extreme range of field guns with super-charge to hit the pass The battery commander, Major Bawa, suddenly remembered that he had two brand new guns in his battery which were known to be over-shooting by 350–450 metres, and that was just the extra distance needed These particular guns were ordered up to Chowkibal to be in position there by first light on 21 May so as to be able to support the attack on the pass that morning. Great credit must be given to the gunners for moving those big guns over the very narrow, circuitous and slippery road.

Advance to Nastachhun Pass was resumed at 1000 hours on 21 May Time was taken in the morning to tie up artillery support and other details about the attack on the pass Artillery support by field guns at Chowkibal was arranged on a timed programme, owing to the uncertainty of wireless communications, while the mountain battery with the column was detailed to take up impromptu targets The attack on the pass went in at about 1300 hours and the pass was captured in an hour Enemy put up only a token resistance. He was believed to have been completely surprised and demoralised by the shells from the guns.

1 Sikh was pushed through, while 1 Madras held the pass, and before last light it secured the Naichian end of the Nastachhun defile, 10 km beyond the pass

Nastachhun Pass was over 3050 metres high and extremely cold even in May It was further notorious for a piercing and ceaseless wind The discomfort that the troops—mostly Madrasis—suffered that night without any great-coats or blankets was extreme The Sikhs slightly lower down the other side had a comparatively comfortable night

On the afternoon of 21 May Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh received

instructions from General Thimayya to push on to Tithwal

Night 21/22 May was spent without incident Orders were issued that night for 1 Sikh to resume advance at first light with 1 Madras less a company (to be left at pass) to follow behind as reserve

1 Sikh led the advance next morning (22 May) with 1 Madras less coy behind them in immediate reserve. Opposition throughout the day was almost negligible, except for odd sniping here and there. Precautions, however, could not be relaxed and the advance was carried out tactically By an hour before last light the forward elements of 1 Sikh had secured the defile beyond Chhamkot still about 8 km from Tithwal along the track Chhamkot was considered to be a good place for rest before resuming the advance on to Tithwal. Besides, Tithwal was within easy range of mountain guns, which could, therefore, go into position to support the attack next morning

The plan for the capture of Tithwal was simple:

(a) 1 Sikh were to carry out night advance along track Chhamkot-Baltal north of Dhana, mostly running along the watershed, so as to secure the spur overlooking Tithwal by first light on 23 May

(b) 1 Madras were to advance along the main track and secure after first light the high ground on the left, assisted by 1 Sikh from across the *Nala*

(c) Mountain battery was to support the operation from their position at Chhamkot.

The operation went according to plan The Sikhs, after a hazardous march over a steep, narrow and difficult track, which caused some delay, secured the ridge over-looking Tithwal by 0900 hours. The enemy was completely surprised upon the appearance of the Indian troops from this unexpected direction, and evacuated his positions around Tithwal without a fight, and withdrew across the river Kishanganga Tithwal was entered by 1 Sikh at 0930 hours on 23 May. Soon afterwards, the Madrasis also arrived and occupied, according to plan, features south of the village

The village was found to be in ruins, as a result of sacking and burning by raiders in their initial invasion. Huge stores of the hostiles' food-stuff, including canned supplies, were captured This was a god-send to the Indian troops who had been almost starving for the past two days, having outstripped their B Echelon supplies carried on ponies

The enemy was reported to have thrown all his reserves of arms, ammunition and equipment into the fast flowing stream of the Kishanganga river before fleeing Some important documents were, however, captured, including an "Intelligence Summary" dated 13 May which gave correct details of the change of command carried out recently and the regrouping of the Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir

CHAPTER X

Limited Successes on the Uri Front

(January-June 1948)

Brigadier L P. Sen, Commander 161 Infantry Brigade, did not have sufficiently strong forces at his disposal at Uri to undertake offensive operations towards Domel and at the same time prevent his line of communication being cut The winter snow blocked any major reinforcement or supplies Essentially, therefore, his task was to consolidate his position, prevent tribal infiltration on to the line of communication, and take offensive action on a limited scale when suitable opportunities offered On 16 December 1947 (i e. a week before the capture of Jhangar by the hostiles) Brigadier Sen wrote an appreciation of the situation. It presented an excellent analysis of the situation and of the prospects.

APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION

In his appreciation of the situation Brigadier Sen took into careful consideration various factors relevant to his object of forming a firm base at Uri in order to prevent the raiders from entering the Kashmir Valley Uri was of very great strategic importance since it commanded the routes to Domel, Punch and Srinagar It was surrounded by high features At least one and a half battalions were required for its defences In addition it was necessary to have reserves for counter-attacking enemy thrusts towards the features commanding Uri Besides troops required for the defence of Uri, it was necessary to have additional troops to protect the line of communication Uri-Baramula. This important line of communication was 48 km in length The road was bordered along its entire southern flank by thickly wooded features and on its northern flank by the river Jhelum The river was not deep, and though it had a fast current, it could be crossed at any portion of its length Although the river was fordable it was most unlikely that any serious threat would develop from the northern flank, it was the southern flank which was more vulnerable and needed looking after Not only Uri but Mahura and Baramula must be held at all costs. It was of vital importance to protect the Power House at Mahura

The two main enemy thrusts were likely to be against line of communication Uri-Baramula and against the Srinagar Valley from Handwara There were other possible enemy approaches but they were not of much significance. Thus, although routes led into the Srinagar Valley from Gilgit in the north, they were covered with snow and hence

any large enemy movement from this quarter could be discounted during the winter months. Similarly the threat of an enemy advance from Punch side was not serious, for the route which led from Punch into the Srinagar Valley via Gulmarg was covered with deep snow. There was another route via Shupiyan, which was snow-bound in parts, and difficult On the whole it was estimated that no large scale enemy attack into the Valley could take place from the direction of Punch.

In short the problem facing Brigadier Sen was how to dispose his forces so as to safeguard certain important places, protect likely enemy approaches and energetically meet enemy thrusts Five places of vital importance needed protection—Uri, Mahura, Baramula, Srinagar and Srinagar aerodrome. Enemy approaches to Mahura, Rampur, Heman Buniyar and Naushahra had to be guarded Four likely enemy thrusts had to be combated, viz , at Uri, on the line of communication Uri-Baramula, along the right bank of the river Jhelum to Baramula and from Handwara to either Baramula or Srinagar via tracks running south from Handwara to Baramula or via Sopore or Bandipur It was estimated that 1500 hostiles were concentrated in Bhatgiran while smaller groups of about 500 hostiles were holding Dacchi, Kalgai, Churunda and Handwara area. The main enemy concentrations were in Garhi, Chakothi and Domel Enemy was estimated to be 6000 strong

To meet the enemy threat, Brigadier Sen had at his disposal five infantry battalions (plus three attached companies) and supporting arms, (i e one squadron armoured cars). His plan was to have two and a half battalions for the defence of Uri area, one battalion for the protection of the line of communication Uri-Baramula and one battalion for the defence of Baramula area His intention was to employ (in Uri area) one and a half battalions on the picquets and to keep one battalion as a striking force For the protection of the line of communication Uri-Baramula, Battalion Headquarters less three companies were to be at Rampur, two companies at Mahura and one company at Heman Buniyar This disposition of the forces would enable the battalion commander (assigned the duty of protecting the L of C) to hold the approaches, patrol vigorously and have one company in hand as a reserve It would also ensure strong protection for Mahura As regards Baramula area, the battalion less one company would be at Baramula while one company would be at Naushahra. Thus the Baramula battalion would be strong enough to meet any threat along the right bank of the river Jhelum and from Handwara area

Brigadier Sen's appreciation of the situation was remarkably accurate in its assessment of the enemy plans and intentions In February 1948 a strong enemy threat developed from Handwara, as already described Later on, in April 1948, enemy made a bold bid to destroy Mahura Power House and to cut off the line of communication Uri-Baramula

Uri had its first heavy snowfall about the middle of January 1948, resulting in this front getting more or less frozen for the time being. Activity on both sides was confined to local patrolling only Intelligence reports, however, showed that an enemy build-up was taking place in Uri and Mahura areas His obvious intention was to keep up pressure on the garrison at Uri and to attack Mahura in order to destroy the Power House and to cut off the line of communication between Rampur and Uri By the first week of April, enemy reinforcements to Uri-Mahura areas had swollen to eight battalions, which were disposed as follows.

(i) One battalion in area Gohalan and Dardkot
(ii) One battalion in area Shahdara, Sultan Dhakki and Kalgai.
(iii) One battalion in area Zambur Pattan, Jabri and Dabkan
(iv) One battalion in area *Nala* Zambur Pattan and Dhanni Saiyidan
(v) One battalion in area Maiyan and Bijhama
(vi) One battalion in area Kopra, Bagna, Islamabad and Limbar
(vii) Two battalions, described as Jinnah's Fauj, were recent reinforcements

To meet the growing enemy threat to Uri, Mahura and line of communication Mahura-Uri, 161 Infantry Brigade was reorganised By the first week of March, 6 Rajputana Rifles and 2 Dogra were concentrated at Uri, 4 Kumaon at Mahura and 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles at Baramula Later, on 8/9 April when enemy threat to Mahura increased considerably, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles left Baramula for Nag Nari On 17 April, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles less B company moved to Mahura, B company continued to hold its position, and 1 Madras guarded line of communication between Heman Buniyar and Mahura.

The main Indian picquets in Mahura sector were at Dildar, Chittor, Anandparbat, Sherkot, Spring and Arambagh

The main Indian picquets in Uri sector were named Nalwa, Jai, Moti, Tagore, Mangal, Akbar, Shivaji, Tipoo, Narayan, Charkha, Diamond, Ashoka and Subhash

RAIDS AND COUNTER-RAIDS

Till the first week of April, in Mahura sector, activity was confined on both sides to raids and counter-raids 4 Kumaon left no opportunity to probe into enemy positions On 4 March, a one-company fighting patrol was sent to attack feature Pt. 7760—a strong enemy position The patrol caught the enemy by surprise and killed 35 hostiles by a bayonet charge Artillery then took a hand in demoralising the enemy, killing an estimated 57 of them On 16 March, a strong fighting patrol of A and D companies and Tactical Headquarters proceeded to Chhulan As the patrol neared the objective enemy opened up with rifle, light machine gun and medium machine gun fire As the patrol withdrew enemy tried to follow but gave it up on noticing that an ambush had been laid for him.

Then the enemy tried to attack some Indian picquets. On 17 March

enemy concentrated in Dhanni Saiyidan to attack picquets Dildar and Spring. Enemy was dispersed by artillery and medium machine gun fire. At 2000 hours on 18 March two enemy companies from Bijhama and one company from Pt. 7760 advanced to attack picquet Dildar. The attack was beaten off with the help of artillery, medium machine guns and mortars On 19 March a B company patrol was pinned down by enemy fire from Pt 7760, the patrol was extricated with the help of artillery, which shelled the feature and took a toll of the enemy On the same day, enemy sniped road Mahura-Uri from behind Dwaran with light machine guns On 22 March a patrol to Islamabad was encircled by enemy from Kopra and Lachhipura, but was extricated with the help of artillery Enemy attacks on picquet Anandparbat were repulsed on 7 April On 10 April enemy mortared picquet Chittor A patrol of 4 Kumaon to Pt 7760 was engaged by the enemy, who, however, suffered casualties as a result of artillery shelling and mortar action

On 11 April, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles (who had moved from Baramula to area Nag Nari on 8–9 April) launched an attack on the enemy held feature—Pt 7706. A, B and D companies and Tactical Headquarters advanced from Nag Nari. The leading platoon overcame some weak resistance and advanced near Pt 7706 at 1100 hours, but was pinned down by heavy fire from the bunkers Thereupon another platoon was sent to reinforce the leading platoon The platoons were engaged in close fight with the enemy with bayonets and khukries before returning to base Enemy suffered casualties 26 killed and 34 wounded Indian casualties were 8 wounded. Sniping persisted throughout the night Aircraft of the RIAF bombed and strafed nearby enemy positions A patrol to Bambyar came under enemy fire from nearby houses and withdrew under cover of medium machine guns and armoured cars

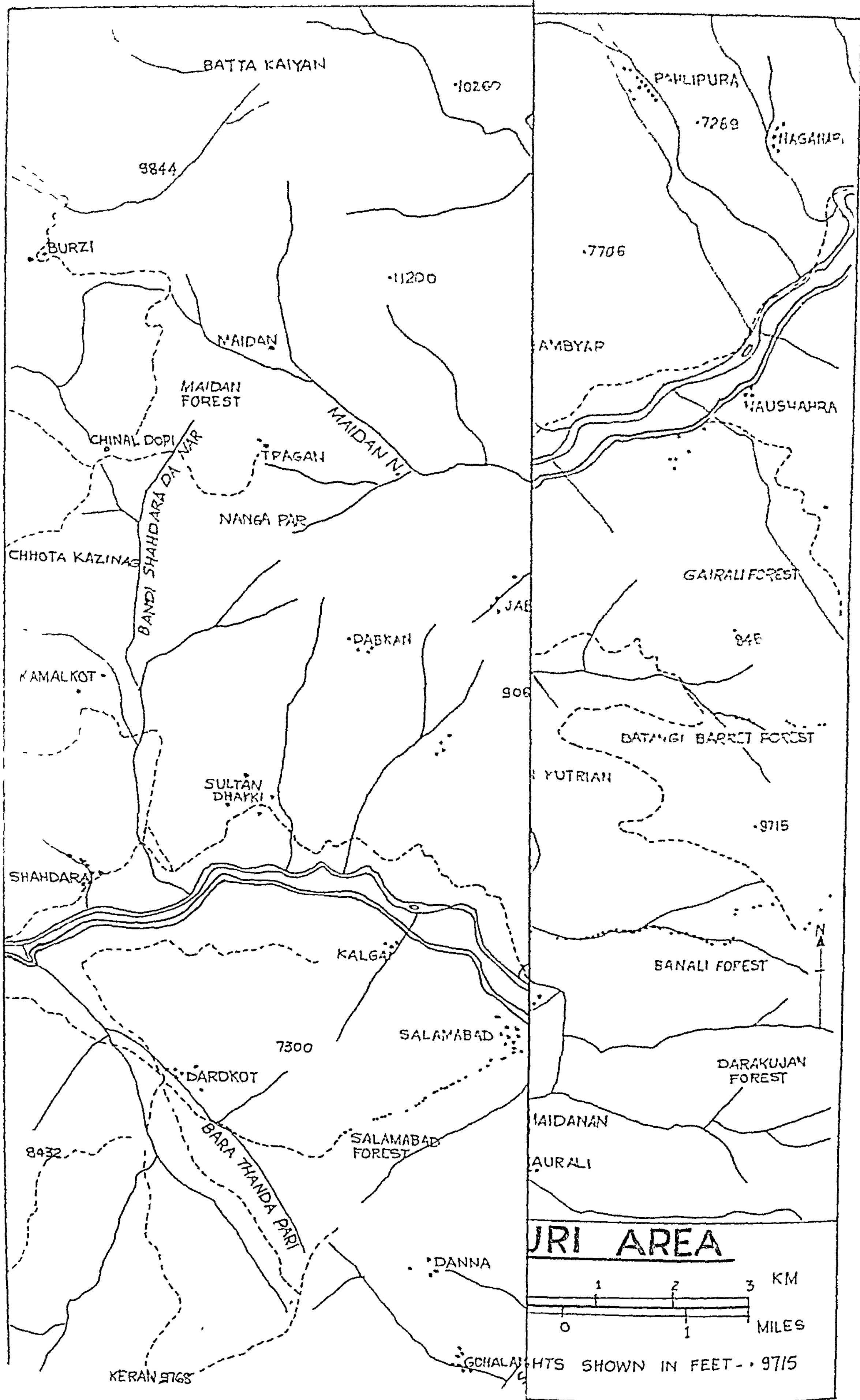
After all this probing into enemy defensive positions Indian troops prepared to launch attacks to capture Kopra and Pt 7760 and Goashar. About the middle of April 1948, the Indian troops were disposed as follows

(i) 4 Kumaon was holding picquets Anandparbat, Sherkot, Arambagh and Chittor
(ii) 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles was on Pt 7706, spread along the feature
(iii) 1 Madras was guarding the line of communication between Heman Buniyar and Mahura.

The enemy forces were disposed as follows

(i) Two weak battalions faced 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles.
(ii) Three battalions covered the area from Zambur Pattan to Kopra
(iii) Main concentrations were at Lacchipura, Maiyan, Pt 7760, Goashar, Chhulan, Baribaikh, Bagna and Islamabad

On 14 April the commander of 4 Kumaon issued orders for the capture of Kopra and the establishment of picquets on this feature. B, D and



BATTA KAIYAN
10260
9844
BURZI
PAHLIPURA
7269
NAGANARI
7706
11200
MAIDAN
AMBYAR
MAIDAN FOREST
MAIDAN N.
NAUSHAHRA
CHINAL DOPI
BANDI SHAHDARA DA NAR
TRAGAN
NANGA PAR
CHHOTA KAZINAG
GAIRALI FOREST
DABKAN
KAMALKOT
845
BATANGI BARRET FOREST
YUTRIAN
SULTAN DHAKKI
9715
SHAHDARA
KALGAI
BANALI FOREST
N
7300
SALAMABAD
DARAKUJAN FOREST
DARDKOT
BARA THANDA PARI
MAIDANAN
8432
SALAMABAD FOREST
AURALI
URI AREA
DANNA
KM
0 1 2 3
MILES
GOHALAN
HTS SHOWN IN FEET • 9715
KERAN 5768

C companies were to lead the attack and secure the objective The forming up place was to be the north side of the bridge The start line was to be the track on the south of picquet Chittor, and H hour was to be 2100 hours on D Night

25-pounder guns were to give support from Heman Buniyar and Uri and mountain guns were to support from Mahura. Targets had been registered The Forward Observation Officer was to be with Tactical HQ

One 3-inch mortar was to give left flank protection from picquet Chittor and the other from near milestone 80 to protect the right flank Two 3-inch mortars were to move to Kopra at first light

Aircraft were to carry out two sorties after D Night to strafe Lachhipura

As regards the deception plan, F company less one platoon and one platoon A company were to simulate attack on Dara and Pt 7760 from 1830 hours onwards until 2200 hours on D Night Two 3-inch mortars from picquet Anandparbat and guns from Uri were to support this mock attack

B, C and D companies and Tactical Headquarters moved off at 2000 hours on 14 April to attack Kopra At 0730 hours on 15 April Kopra was captured and the companies established picquets. Casualties inflicted on the enemy were 13 killed and 9 wounded Indian casualties were nil As a result of the capture of Kopra the hostiles were sandwiched between the Garhwalis and Kumaonis, and taking discretion to be the better part of valour, they fled from Limbar, Islamabad and Bagna

On 19-20 April operations began for driving out the enemy from area Pt 7760 and Pt 9062 4 Kumaon was directed against Pt 7760 and 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles (who had arrived at Mahura on 17 April) directed against Pt 9062 4 Kumaon came up against considerable opposition, and it was only with great difficulty that the enemy was pushed back to Goashar, where he again held up the advance After overcoming stiff resistance, C company secured Goashar Shortly afterwards a strong enemy counter-attack developed but was repelled with the help of A company Enemy resistance then weakened, and A company was able to secure Pt 7760 at 0725 hours on 20 April Indian casualties were 6 wounded against enemy casualties estimated at 42 killed and 24 wounded

3 Royal Garhwal Rifles were directed towards Pt 9062 At 0200 hours on 20 April A and C companies and Tactical Headquarters advanced in heavy rain. The ground was very slippery and climb very steep A stiff fight took place but the enemy was driven from his strong defensive position only when B company arrived at 1100 hours on 21 April Next day a patrol from C and D companies was sent to Zambur Pattan, which was found to be unoccupied The operations were successfully concluded and the threat to Mahura was removed

forward the company encountered enemy fire The fire was silenced and three enemy killed No further opposition was encountered and so D company secured its objective Next day C company moved up and the battalion advanced on Kaurali expecting enemy resistance But the enemy had disappeared and so Kaurali was also secured Picquets were established by 1600 hours. By this operation, which ended in the capture of Kaurali, enemy threat to the line of communication was averted.

Simultaneously with the attacks in Mahura area enemy attacked Indian picquets in Uri area also In the second week of April, when enemy pressure increased in Uri-Mahura sector, two battalions—6 Rajputana Rifles and 2 Dogra—were manning the picquets in Uri. The picquets garrisoned by 6 Rajputana Rifles were as follows

(i) Chauhan	—One platoon from C company
(ii) Subhash	—C company less one platoon plus one section medium machine guns
(iii) Ashoka	—B company less two platoons with one section 3-inch mortars
(iv) Man	—One platoon B company
(v) Ranjit	—One platoon B company
(vi) Nalwa	—D company
(vii) Picquet, a little to the east	—A company

Subhash was a bare isolated feature overlooked by a long feature about 245 metres higher. It had a thick forest of pine trees In its north was a sheer drop a few hundred metres deep Chauhan was about 900 metres south of the spur which ended abruptly in a steep cliff Ashoka was about 630 metres in the north separated by a forest of pine trees

The picquets garrisoned by 2 Dogra were as follows

(i) Jai	—Defence platoon
(ii) Narayan	—A company less two platoons
(iii) Charkha	—One platoon A company
(iv) Moti	—One platoon A company
(v) Tagore	—C company less one platoon
(vi) Mangal	—One platoon C company
(vii) Shivaji	—B company less two platoons
(viii) Akbar	—One platoon B company
(ix) Tipoo	—One platoon B company

D company was in reserve

It was in the middle of April 1948, when with the advent of the spring vigorous operations could be undertaken, that the enemy launched fierce assaults on the Indian picquets, especially Subhash, Ashoka and Nalwa. On 18 April, enemy movements were observed in the area of Kalgai. By the close of the day their activities had increased to indicate an attack during the following night It was fortunate that the

companies were concentrated at about 2000 hours

A company took the lead and captured its objective by 0715 hours on 30 April while the others were still on the move The progress of D company was considerably slowed down, as the climb was steep and the company had to move along a narrow track through the pine forest It was daylight before the company neared its objective The enemy subjected them to light machine gun fire Dhonkal Singh, a leading scout, received serious injuries in the left shoulder Nevertheless he crawled forward within a few metres of the enemy post and threw grenades killing three His company then rushed forward for the attack and scattered the enemy Dhonkal Singh succeeded in killing two more enemy but he too was badly hurt and breathed his last at 2100 hours the same day For his gallant action he was posthumously awarded Maha Vir Chakra

The enemy were busy in assembling their force near Subura for a large scale counter-attack, but the accurate fire of the guns dispersed them Thereupon B company passing through the positions of A and D companies put in its attack Two of the enemy were killed and the others fled in panic Thus B company secured its objective by 0945 hours on 1 May. The hostiles made several attempts to regain lost ground but they could not face the fire of the 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns.

Thus by the beginning of May 1948 the enemy threat to Uri and Mahura had been removed, and 161 Infantry Brigade was now poised for the advance towards Domel

PLANNING FOR ADVANCE TOWARDS DOMEL

Brigadier L P Sen, Commander 161 Infantry Brigade, had written an appreciation of the situation on 28 January 1948 regarding the advance towards Domel This appreciation, with slight modifications, served as an admirable basis for the plan for the Spring offensive Brigadier Sen took into consideration the suitability of the various routes for an advance to Domel By far the most important route was the main road from Uri to Domel It was a first class road, 72 km in length, bordered on the north by the river Jhelum and high hills and on the south flank also by high hills Between Uri and Domel there were 22 bridges Of these 8 were of wooden structure, 3 had masonry arches and 11 were of steel The chief draw-back of advancing by this route was that the enemy, who was well trained in demolishing bridges, would destroy as many bridges as possible while retreating, thus impeding the advance Across the river Jhelum were two suspension bridges, one at Uri and the other constructed by the enemy at Chinari. Apart from this possibility of the demolition of bridges the enemy expected an attack to be made from this direction, and would, therefore, be well prepared to meet the attack Carefully planned defensive enemy positions would block the advance to Domel On the other hand, the assaulting troops would have the support of armour and artillery Superior fire power

would be a very important factor Experience had conclusively shown that the enemy attacked only when in overwhelming strength When faced by a strong force, supported by armour and artillery, he avoided battle and took to the hills to engage in guerilla warfare Further the maintenance of a column advancing from Uri would be easier if it operated along the axis of the main road Uri-Domel To maintain morale, the evacuation of casualties must be swift, which could best be effected by the use of vehicles After taking into consideration all these aspects of the problem—the advantages, as well as the disadvantages—Brigadier Sen came to the conclusion that the main thrust should be along the road Uri-Domel

The road Uri-Domel was, however, completely dominated by the commanding positions on the hills to the south The country was mountainous, with the hills running north and south from the river Jhelum to the Pir Panjal range, and thus considerably hampering the advance. The ridge of the Pir Panjal range was out of effective range for artillery support by field guns moving along the main road Uri-Domel, unless supercharge cartridges were used, and even then, the fire support would not be very effective Maintenance of a force moving along the Pir Panjal range would present serious difficulties On the whole, therefore, the advance by this route, would entail difficulties

An advance could take place also from Uri along the hills north of the river Jhelum An advance along this route must be along the Chhota Kazinag range, a dominating feature The country over which the advance would have to take place was mountainous, steep and covered with forests in certain areas Ground for manoeuvre was limited. Fire support for troops advancing along the Chhota Kazinag range could be provided by guns located initially in Uri and as the advance continued, from positions along the road Uri-Domel Battalion support weapons, ammunition, food and blankets would have to be carried by the men, porters and animal transport over difficult terrain The maintenance of troops and the evacuation of casualties would, indeed, present a difficult problem In case of a column advancing along the hills north of the river Jhelum it would be of vital importance to capture intact the suspension bridge over the river at Chinari, for if the enemy destroyed this bridge the column would be cut off from the main road Uri-Domel and maintenance and reinforcement of the column would present a serious problem

Advance could also take place from Handwara via Tithwal to Domel This route was, however, not taken into consideration at this stage of the planning of the operations The conclusion arrived at by Brigadier Sen was that the main advance along the road Uri-Domel would have to be supplemented by an advance either along the hills north of the river Jhelum or along the hills south of the Jhelum Brigadier Sen preferred the last route for if the advance took place south of the main road—Uri-Domel, although the hills were higher and

more difficult, he could control and reinforce his troops quicker and more easily than if they were north of the river Jhelum. Brigadier Sen, was, however, quite alive to the seriousness of the problem, for as the advance continued his line of communication would lengthen while the enemy line of communication would shorten This would be of great advantage to the enemy for he would be able to move his reinforcements quickly Moreover the enemy would be pulling back into already prepared positions and would, therefore, have more troops available for reinforcing any threatened position

Based on this appreciation Brigadier Sen planned to capture Domel in three stages In the first phase, Chinari was to be captured by a double attack—an advance by two battalions (supported by artillery and armour) along the main road Uri-Domel and an advance by three battalions along the hills south of the main road Uri-Domel via Nawa, Khariana, and Summan In the second phase Garhi was to be captured This was to be followed by the capture of Domel in the third phase

This plan was modified in May 1948 when the Spring offensive started. The main advance was to be along the road Uri-Domel but the supplementary advance was to be initially along the hills north of the river Jhelum and subsequently along the hills south of the river Jhelum.

In making his plan for the advance on Domel Brigadier Sen took into careful consideration the enemy dispositions It was estimated that six battalions were operating in Uri-Chinari area. One battalion was in Bhatgiran-Churunda area while adjoining it was another battalion holding Muhri Doba, Gohalan, Kalgai and Dardkot with one company each Chakothi was held by one battalion Another battalion less one company was at Chinari with one company occupying Kathai One battalion was holding Shahdara and Sultan Dhakki with two companies each Another battalion was in area Chinal Dori—the Battalion Headquarters and one company were at Chinal Dori while one company each was at Maidan, Tragan and Nangatak. The composition of the enemy was mainly Punchis with a backing of Pathans They were reported to be armed with two 3-inch mortars per battalion and one light machine gun per platoon

For the operations for the capture of Chinari 161 Infantry Brigade Group had under command·

Headquarters 161 Infantry Brigade
161 Infantry Brigade Signal Section
161 Infantry Brigade Light Aid Detachment
6 Rajputana Rifles
7 Sikh
2 Dogra
4 Kumaon
3 J & K Militia Battalion
114 Comp Platoon RIASC
3 Light Field Ambulance

4 Fd SU
Detachment 121 Infantry Workshop Company IEME
10 AFVs
12 Carriers
and in support·
B Squadron 7 Cavalry
11 Field Regiment less one battery (one battery on call)
Patiala Mountain Battery
32 Assault Field Company
1544 Pioneer Company

The 8 Squadron RIAF was available to provide close air support.

Brigadier Sen planned to carry out the operations for the capture of Chinari in five phases as follows

Phase I—On the right 4 Kumaon was to advance from start line Pt 7154 They were to have under command one company 2 (Para) Madras located at Goashar and one company Sawai Man Guards located on Pt 9062 They were further to have in support one battery 11 Field Regiment On the left 2 Dogra was to advance from Tagore picquet and secure Pt 7300 They were to have in support one battery 11 Field Regiment and Patiala Mountain Battery. Medium machine guns from Tagore and Naina picquets were to protect the right flank of 2 Dogra with fire on Salamabad 6 Rajputana Rifles and Patiala Mountain Battery concentrated in Uri were to be in reserve. 32 Assault Field Company was to launch a Bailey bridge near the broken bridge at milestone 68 on orders from Brigade Headquarters. D day was 19/20 May

77 Para Brigade, holding a firm base at Uri, was to carry out a deception plan by demonstrating in the direction of Bhatgiran The Punch Brigade was to demonstrate in the direction of Bagh

Phase II—A small mobile column consisting of B Squadron 7 Light Cavalry, one company 7 Sikh in 10 armoured fighting vehicles and 5 carriers, detachment 32 Assault Field Company in 3 carriers, detachment 3-inch mortar 7 Sikh in 3 carriers, and one Forward Observation Officer in a carrier, under the command of Lt-Col Rajindar Singh, was to advance from start line—Tagore picquet, move to milestone 62 area and engage and destroy enemy in area Shahdara-Dardkot *Nalas* Medium machine guns on Nalwa picquet were to fire on any enemy seen in Dacchi area Detachment Engineers with the mobile column were to sweep road Uri-Domel for mines and clear any roadblocks encountered 7 Sikh less one company were to move from Uri to milestone 62 and join the mobile column after it had passed the start line 6 Rajputana Rifles were to be in reserve in area Tagore picquet Air support was also to be provided for this operation

Phase III—On the right 4 Kumaon were to capture Pt. 10657—i.e., Chhota Kazinag They were to have in support one battery 11 Field Regiment On the left 6 Rajputana Rifles were to advance from

milestone 62 and secure Pt 8432 They were to have in support one battery 11 Field Regiment and Patiala Mountain Battery. 7 Sikh was to be in reserve at milestone 62 area.

Phase IV and V—Verbal orders were to be issued later

In short there was to be a double thrust—one directed from Mahura to Pandu and the other from Uri along the road towards Chakothi.

THE THRUST TOWARDS PANDU

4 Kumaon was assigned the task of making a thrust from Mahura towards Pandu. The advance was to cover difficult terrain—steep hills and snow covered peaks. It was estimated that the enemy was in position as follows

(i) Chinari—	one company, north of Jhelum and the remainder of the battalion south of the river
(ii) Kathai—	one company
(iii) Nanga Pir—	one company
(iv) Chinal Dori—	Battalion Headquarters and two platoons
(v) Pimple—	one platoon above Tragan
(vi) Maidan—	one platoon
(vii) Pimple—	one company

The following troops were placed under command 4 Kumaon for this operation·

One company Sawai Man Guards

One company 2 (Para) Madras

One battery 25-pounder was in support of the troops

Commander 4 Kumaon issued instructions for the thrust from Mahura towards Pandu 4 Kumaon was to advance north of the Jhelum river via Chinal Dori-Chhota Kazinag (i e Pt. 10657)-Pandu up to Pt. 6873. They had to capture a range of hills about 6 km long. This range had six prominent 'pimples' or peaks, varying from 3050 to 3350 metres high. The code names for five of the prominent pimples were Nan, Nan 1, Nan 2, Nan 3, Nan 4. The range was very steep and it had one track leading from the direction of Mahura and another from the north running from pimple to pimple and connected from the enemy side. The range was held by two enemy battalions i e. the 4th Azad Punch Battalion and a Pathan Battalion The enemy had been in occupation of the range for over three months, so he had ample time to construct shell proof bunkers.

4 Kumaon moved from Mahura at 0900 hours on 18 May 1948 with seven days' rations in pack They crossed over the suspension bridge and concentrated in area Baila Dori In order to surprise the enemy, two measures were adopted—the battalion moved in small parties to the concentration areas, further during the move and in the concentration area no fires were lit and everybody kept under cover so that movements should not be observed by enemy occupying dominating

positions on the pimples On reaching the concentration area, registration by artillery was started at 1700 hours and was carried out on all pimples A company of Sawai Man Guards was in position at Pt. 9062 to carry out the deception plan towards Nangatak At 1600 hours on 19 May B, C and D companies moved off from the concentration area in order to attack Nan from the north, using an extremely difficult route over a range of hills more than 3950 metres high The area which was out of enemy view was covered during the day and the remainder by night A platoon was sent ahead to make a foot-path over the knife edged rock and to use ropes if necessary According to the information then available, Nan 4 and Nan 3 were not held but Nan 2 was held in strength The plan of the operations was

(i) The leading B company was to capture Nan 4 and Nan 3 before midnight on D day and establish firm base.

(ii) Then D company was to pass through and establish firm base on Nan 2 by 0400 hours. Then C company was to capture Nan 1 at dawn After capture of Nan 1, the company from Nan 3 and Nan 4 was to take over Nan 2 also and the company from Nan 2 was to capture Nan after dawn.

B company after an extremely difficult march secured Nan 4 and Nan 3 without firing a shot D company passed through and at about 0400 hours on 20 May its leading platoon, when within 45 metres of the top of Nan 2, got entangled in thick bushes and was subjected to heavy light machine gun and rifle fire Both the leading sections were pinned to the ground Realising that only bold and impetuous attack would save his leading platoons from destruction, the company commander ordered the rest of the company to push on to the attack At the same time he asked for artillery support, which unfortunately was delayed for half an hour due to the breaking down of the wireless set. Not discouraged by lack of artillery support, the company made a bold attack on the enemy position The commander of the leading platoon (which had got stuck up in the bushes) rushed forward with the reserve sections from the left flank and captured an enemy post From here he directed the light machine gun and 2-inch mortar fire on the enemy posts, which were firing on his other sections C company commander, who was following with his company closely behind got in touch with the Tactical Headquarters and he was ordered to help D company from the left flank and attack the enemy as quickly as possible. The 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns turned their fire on to Nan 1 to prevent the enemy from reinforcing Nan 2 Both the company commanders worked in co-operation and directed a spirited charge on the enemy positions. Such was the impetuosity of the charge that the enemy after a faint-hearted opposition fled in wild confusion The enemy casualties were 30 killed and 50 wounded The casualties of 4 Kumaon were 2 killed and 7 wounded Having secured the objective an attempt was made to clear the enemy from Nan 1 and Nan Accordingly A company moved off at

0200 hours on 21 May to attack Nan while C company advanced to attack Nan 1. The attack was launched simultaneously and both the objectives were secured without opposition at 0530 hours Then B company pushed on and captured Chinal Dori at 1645 hours At 2200 hours A company moved through B company to attack enemy-held feature Chhota Kazinag. This feature was captured after stiff fighting at 0530 hours on 22 May Enemy casualties were 10 killed counted and 20 wounded; Indian casualties were 5 wounded Tactical Headquarters was now established at Chinal Dori and the forward position was held at Chhota Kazinag

Encouraged by this success, it was decided to seize Pandu feature, which dominated Chakothi Accordingly C and B companies moved from Chinal Dori to Chhota Kazinag on 24 May. C company captured Pt. 9178 without opposition early on 25 May and then moved forward to attack Pandu The feature was captured at 0700 hours, and Tactical Headquarters was established at Pandu Thus 4 Kumaon successfully carried out its task of capturing Chhota Kazinag and Pandu feature, thereby enabling the Indian troops to dominate the road Uri-Domel at Chakothi

THE THRUST TOWARDS CHAKOTHI

4 Kumaon were successful in advancing from Mahura to Chhota Kazinag and Pandu feature The column operating on the road Uri-Domel was less fortunate, for it encountered stiff opposition. On 18 May the enemy burnt the bridge near mile 66 and also established a road-block in the area of mile 64 Uri-Domel He also increased his activity from the direction of the Haji Pir Pass, thus keeping 77 Para Brigade engaged in area south of Uri

Pt 7300 was held by approximately two companies, supported by medium machine guns and mortars Salamabad feature was also held by the enemy. 2 Dogra were, therefore, ordered to capture Salamabad feature prior to the attack on Pt 7300 At 2130 on 19 May, A, B and C companies moved out to capture Salamabad feature and Pt. 7300; D company was in reserve The battalion lost its way in the dark As the capture of Salamabad feature was absolutely essential before any advance from Uri along the road could be attempted, orders were issued to 2 Dogra to capture the feature immediately Surprise had, however, been lost and small parties of enemy commenced shooting on to the Salamabad feature from the adjoining hills. At 0600 hours on 20 May, A company tried to capture its objective Pt 7300 before C company had captured its objective The two leading platoons of A company were encircled by the enemy. The reserve platoon which moved forward to the rescue was also encircled Company Headquarters was also encircled It was a serio[illegible] situation The Company Headquarters fought its way out The [illegible] of the company put in three bayonet charges to break thr[illegible]my cordon. The third

attempt was successful A company fought its way out and fell back on B company position for reorganisation Enemy casualties were 25 killed counted and 40 wounded Indian casualties were 10 killed and 20 wounded At 1100 hours enemy attacked A, B and C companies which were concentrated at B company's objective. Enemy thrice counter-attacked our position and came within 135 metres of it All the counter-attacks were repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy; Indian casualties were 2 killed and 12 wounded

As the Dogras were held up at Salamabad feature, A, B and C companies of 6 Rajputana Rifles were sent to reinforce them and to protect the left flank of the column advancing along the main road. The enemy, however, retired, and the second phase of the operations began on 21 May when the armoured column advanced along the road Uri-Domel It came across two roadblocks at milestone 65 The road-blocks were cleared by the detachment of engineers, but the column could not advance further as two bridges between milestones 65 and 64 had been blown up by the enemy The column halted during the night 21/22 May between milestones 65 and 64 and resumed the advance on 22 May after the engineers had repaired the bridges. No opposition was met and the column halted for the night at milestone 61 On 23 May, No 2 Troop leading the advance of the column came to a halt as the bridge at milestone 58 was found blown up The enemy subjected the troop to 3-inch mortar fire The troop withdrew at 1430 hours and joined up with the rest of the column, which had advanced up to milestone 60 On 24 May No 1 Troop and No 2 Troop advanced up to milestone 58 but again came under heavy mortar fire The enemy fired more than 120 bombs At 1500 hours a column of 'B' vehicles (about 12×3 ton loaded with Bailey bridging) came very close to the troops The enemy switched on his mortars on this column of 'B' vehicles, killing 1 Naik and wounding 2 Other Ranks and damaging one 3-tonner As it was found impossible to construct the bridge in face of heavy enemy fire the engineers withdrew at 1700 hours and the two troops then withdrew at 1930 hours Another futile attempt was made by No 3 Troop on 25 May to close up to the bridge. The enemy were occupying strong positions and it was not found possible to silence enemy fire. Thus the advance on the road Uri-Domel came abruptly to a halt.

Meanwhile some progress had been made in clearing enemy from the hills south of the river Jhelum During night 20/21 May, 7 Sikh, who were concentrated in area MS 62, advanced to Urusa (MS 60). In the afternoon of 21 May they captured Pt. 6430. The advance was resumed on 22 May, and the Sikhs reached the lower slopes of the Pt. 7315 without much opposition but encountered small arms fire from the enemy in area Chakothi 7 Sikh prepared defences at the lower slopes of the feature and remained there till 25 May when A and B companies captured Pt 7315 after stiff opposition

The advance along the road Uri-Domel had been considerably slowed

down by damaged bridges The enemy was, therefore, able to strengthen his positions astride the road Chakothi It was estimated that approximately one brigade group of Pakistan Army in addition to hordes of tribesmen and Punchis of 'Azad Kashmir', supported by artillery and medium machine guns, was operating in this area. The following units of the Pakistan Army had been identified as part of the enemy force.

1 FF Rif
4 FF Rif
4/16 Punjab
15 Punjab

Known enemy dispositions along road Uri-Domel were:

(a) 4/16 Punjab on the feature south of Chinari
(b) 1 FF Rif with one company on feature near Simmar Kopra, one company in area Pt. 7228, one company nearby, Battalion Headquarters in Bundi forest
(c) 4 FF Rif with one company at Pt 6813, one company at Pt. 3903, one company with detachment 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns in area 9213; Battalion Headquarters at Kathai
(d) One battalion of 15 Punjab in area 9210 Enemy was also located at Pt 10027 and Pt. 6065 but his exact strength at these places was not known

In view of the build-up of enemy forces in the Chakothi sector, General Thimayya decided to move 77 Para Brigade (which was primarily responsible for holding a firm base at Uri and looking after the southern flank and line of communication between Uri-Baramula) to Pandu area in order to harass the enemy from the rear and cut his line of communication west of Chakothi by operating north of Jhelum By advancing west of Pandu, it would be possible to dominate the road right up to Chinari Of course there were administrative difficulties in carrying out this operation There were two main tracks to Pandu from Uri area The first led from Mahura via Dhanni Saiyidan The track from across the suspension bridge over the Jhelum near MS 78 ran east to west along the river bank and then went north-west through Dhanni Saiyidan to Zambur Pattan Up to this place the track was fairly good From here onwards the track was very narrow and was merely a footpath to Pt 7154 The track then wound north to Tragan Then it turned south through a mountain pass to Chinal Dori, from where it turned south-west to Chhota Kazinag along the ridge The track from Chhota Kazinag to Pandu ran along the ridge overlooking the valley of the river Jhelum The second track led from the rope bridge across the river Jhelum near MS 65 opposite Daphni to Chhota Kazinag The mules could not cross the bridge; only three men at a time could use the bridge From this bridge to Sultan Dhak [illegible] is a good mule track, but onwards only a footpath went no[illegible] edge of the ridge to Gundi Faqiran Then it went west[illegible] the lower ridges of

Chhota Kazinag up to Safaida Thus it was obvious that the maintenance of a large number of troops in Pandu area by these tracks would entail difficulties General Thimayya, however, decided to take the risk It was better to face these administrative difficulties and launch the attack from Pandu rather than let the operation of 161 Infantry Brigade be checked by stiffening resistance along the road Uri-Domel.

77 Para Brigade was assigned the task of launching the attack from Pandu 2 Dogra, 4 Kumaon, one section Patiala Mountain Battery and all available animal transport from 161 Infantry Brigade were placed under command of 77 Para Brigade This regrouping and reorganisation was completed by 27 May. The brigade concentrated in area Pandu by 29 May in order to carry out the following tasks

(i) To capture Pt 6873, Pt 10027 and Pt 6065 by 31 May.

(ii) To dominate road Chakothi-Domel at a suitable place between Chakothi and Chinari and deny its use to the enemy, thus preventing him from reinforcing his garrison at Chakothi and at the same time cutting off his line of retreat

(iii) To consolidate in area Uri-Chakothi-Chinari after 161 Infantry Brigade broke through enemy positions along the road Uri-Domel This operation was given the code name 'Gagan'.

Besides planning for the advance towards Chinari, General Thimayya was also anxious to make a thrust from Tithwal towards Muzaffarabad Tithwal had been captured by 163 Infantry Brigade The enemy was reported to be retreating towards Muzaffarabad, the administrative base There were two main approaches to Muzaffarabad from Tithwal The first track wound along the river Kishanganga for about 77 km with steep drops on one side and high precipices on the other The track was reported to have been made fit for the use of jeeps. The second track Tithwal-Naoseri-Khiddar-Pt 10131-Muzaffarabad went through difficult country in the initial stages but later on it was mostly on top of ridges The total distance was 42 km.

General Thimayya instructed Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh, commander of 163 Infantry Brigade, to plan operation 'Suriya' for the thrust from Tithwal towards Muzaffarabad The following additional troops were placed under command 163 Infantry Brigade at Chowkibal on 24 May

2/4 GR

One troop 8 A/Tk Regiment

The task of the commander of 163 Infantry Brigade was to capture the high ground west of Muzaffarabad and Domel with a view to denying to the enemy the use of bridges on the rivers Kishanganga and Jhelum and the line of communication Domel-Uri A double thrust was to be made from the firm base at Tithwal—the main column was to advance along track Tithwal-Naoseri-Khiddar-Pt 10131-Muzaffarabad while the diversionary column was to advance along the river Kishanganga in order to attract the maximum force

THRUST FROM TITHWAL : 29 MAY-5 JUNE

In order to dominate the road Chinari-Chakothi, 77 Para Brigade planned two thrusts—4 Kumaon to capture Pt 6873 and Kathai and 2 Dogra to seize Pt 10027 and Pt 6065 It was estimated that one enemy battalion was holding strong position from Pt. 10027 to Pt. 6065 with one company post at Sari Pt 6873 was held by one company. Sawai Man Guards moved up from Uri and on 29/30 May took over the picquets from 4 Kumaon, thus releasing the latter for the forthcoming operation

Before launching the attack on 31 May, 4 Kumaon had been probing into enemy defences. A fighting patrol to Pt. 6873 on 26 May encountered enemy, one company strong After a brush with the enemy the patrol withdrew On 27 May the enemy-held position was mortared and patrolling was also vigorously carried out. On 29 May 200 Pathans attacked the northern flank of the Pandu defensive position. The enemy was engaged with mortar and the attack was repulsed One of the Indian patrols was ambushed The patrol however extricated itself after sustaining casualties of 2 killed

After these preliminary operations the attack was launched on 31 May. Pt 6873 was a feature much like a pyramid It had only one small path, about 2 metres wide, with small bushes, the rest of the feature was covered with pine trees and was very steep and practically impossible to climb. By careful reconnaissance the whole feature had been accurately registered by mortars As it was out of artillery range, no artillery support was available for this operation The feature was held by one company, suspected to be regular troops, with one section mortar and one section medium machine guns The enemy had constructed a strong defensive position, some of the light machine guns being sited in fox-holes under 6 metres of rock, thereby making the majority of these positions mortar and shell proof.

Tactical Headquarters 4 Kumaon and B company left Pandu (a feature more than 2750 metres high) at 0200 hours on 31 May The company advanced one up and the leading platoon advanced two up By silent marching using PT shoes, by dawn the company reached within 45 metres of the enemy's foremost posts They then came under heavy fire from two medium machine guns, six light machine guns, two 2-inch mortars and six discharger cups. Unhesitatingly the platoon tried to rush the position with the bayonet But it was held up due to the steepness of the climb and the heavy and accurate cross fire. The leading platoon suffered casualties—one killed and four wounded The company commander then tried to rush the position with the second platoon but they too were held up and suffered casualties—4 wounded. Realising that heavy casualties would be entailed by persisting in launching frontal attacks, the company commander tried to manoeuvre his third platoon from the right but could not do so du xtreme steepness of the ground and the heavy enemy fire. company commander

divided his company into two groups—fire group and assault group. He also decided to use his three 2-inch mortars as a battery Meanwhile to soften up the enemy position the Indian 3-inch mortars continued firing on the reverse slopes of the feature away from the Kumaonis The mortars succeeded in neutralising an enemy section of 3-inch mortar and also prevented the enemy from reinforcing the forward troops at the feature The section of medium machine guns also helped in softening up the enemy position.

The company reorganised for the attack It had contacted the enemy at 0600 hours and had tried to rush the enemy position These attempts had failed by 0700 hours Then before the attack was put in at 0900 hours the enemy position was softened by 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns The company's fire group consisted of three 2-inch mortars, nine light machine guns, three discharger cups and two launchers, while the assault group was made up of all the remaining riflemen and sten gunners. Extra 2-inch mortar ammunition and grenades were rushed to the company Under cover of a heavy fire the assault group launched a frontal attack and captured the position. The total casualties of the Kumaonis were 2 killed and 7 wounded whereas the enemy casualties were 30 killed and 40 wounded Large enemy stores were captured, including 7 rifles, 2 Bren guns, 1 sten gun, 2 medium machine guns, and a 2-inch mortar

This success paved the way for the seizure of Kathai without opposition by B company at 2100 hours on 2 June 4 Kumaon consolidated their position.

The task assigned to 2 Dogra to capture Pt 10027 proved even more difficult The Dogras concentrated at Chinal Dori on 27/28 May Advancing from Chinal Dori on 31 May they were in position at Pt 10490 the next day At 0530 hours on 2 June Tactical Headquarters with B and D companies moved forward to capture Pt 11385, preliminary to the attack on Pt. 10027 They were followed a little later (i e at 1130 hours) by A company C company remained at Pt 10490 as a firm base By 1800 hours the forward companies succeeded in securing without opposition Pt 11553, Pt 10437 and Pt 11385 At 0100 hours on 3 June B and D companies with Tactical Headquarters moved forward for the attack on Pt 10027 At 0600 hours the leading B company reached Tharri Di Gali and was 550 metres short of the objective when enemy opened fire with rifles and three medium machine guns The company was pinned to the ground. As the company was on a ridge with sheer drops on either side it was not possible to outflank the enemy The track near Tharri Di Gali was very bad and the men had to use their hands to climb up The flanking medium machine gun fire from Sari was particularly galling No artillery support was available to the forward troops as they were out of artillery range Air support could not be arranged on account of bad weather The company was thus isolated Meanwhile the enemy had started reinforcing this vital part of his

sector There was no alternative except to withdraw B company from the forward position This was done at 1030 hours on 5 June. In view of the stiffening enemy opposition 2 Dogra withdrew to Pandu on 6/7 June

Thus although 4 Kumaon secured Kathai, a feature overlooking the road Chinari-Chakothi, 2 Dogra failed in their attempt to secure Pt 10027 and Pt 6065 The operation 'Gagan', therefore, could not be carried out according to plan

Operation 'Suriya'—the thrust from Tithwal towards Muzaffarabad—could also not be carried out due to inadequacy of forces at the disposal of the commander of 163 Infantry Brigade 163 Infantry Brigade was deployed in Tithwal area as follows

(i) 1 Madras was occupying ridge from Pt 7895 to Pt 7802 and Pir Saheba to Pt 4297

(ii) 1 Sikh was at Pt. 7229

(iii) Brigade Headquarters and 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles formed a firm base around Tithwal

The commander of 163 Infantry Brigade considered that he required at least two battalions to hold Tithwal and, therefore, could only undertake the advance with one battalion Another battalion would be required before operations could be undertaken. The situation regarding the supplies was also not encouraging On 5 June there were only 1/2 days' supplies at Tithwal Commander 163 Infantry Brigade was of the view that he must have at least 7 days' stocks The stocks were being built up with the help of mules and porters This would take at least seven days As soon as weather permitted Sri Div would have to arrange one air sortie a day for daily maintenance Bringing these difficulties to the notice of General Thimayya, the commander of 163 Infantry Brigade expressed his inability to carry out operations until stocking was completed and an extra battalion placed at his disposal General Thimayya accepted the situation and ordered Commander 163 Infantry Brigade to consolidate his position at Tithwal and maintain contact with the enemy by vigorous and long range patrolling

In making plans for future operations, General Thimayya took stock of the situation as it existed on 5 June 1948. With the Pakistan Army units now taking a major part in the operations, it was apparent that very strenuous efforts would have to be made to dislodge the enemy from strong positions on the road Domel-Chakothi and in Muzaffarabad area The three brigades (77 Para Brigade,163 Infantry Brigade and 161 Infantry Brigade) which had taken part in the operations had sustained fairly heavy casualties From 21 May to 27 May, 40 were killed and 95 wounded, and from 28 May to 4 June, 19 were killed and 55 wounded Moreover neither operation 'Suriya' could be undertaken nor operation 'Gagan' successfully carried out. As the forward company of 2 Dogra had been isolated at Tharra Di Gali in a vain attempt to capture Pt 10027, General Thimayya ordered the withdrawal of the Dogras from the forward positions At the same time he issued the following orders

to Commander 77 Para Bde for the reorganisation and regrouping of the forces

(i) 4 Kumaon with one mountain battery were to protect the northern flank and continue harassing the enemy's rear This battalion was to revert to 161 Infantry Brigade's command.

(ii) Tactical Headquarters 77 Para Brigade, 2 Dogra and Sawai Man Guards were to return to Uri 2 Dogra were to revert under command 161 Infantry Brigade All moves were to be completed by 6 June

The attack north of river Jhelum having failed, General Thimayya took into consideration the possibility of a drive south of the river Jhelum towards the Pir Panjal range Two enemy battalions with medium machine guns, mortars and artillery were holding this sector 7 Sikh holding Kopra and Tofarabad ridge were being constantly mortared Their maintenance was becoming very difficult and Commander 161 Infantry Brigade was of the opinion that they were getting demoralised and, therefore, it was necessary to put in an attack on enemy position 6 Rajputana Rifles were occupying positions south of the road between the Tofarabad ridge and Uri The north flanking attack having failed and the danger from the south having increased since the Pir Panjal range from Haji Pir Pass westwards was occupied by the enemy, thus threatening Indian positions on the lower slopes in area south of Uri, General Thimayya decided on a bold southern sweep towards the Pir Panjal range 2/3 Gorkha Rifles and Sawai Man Guards of 77 Para Brigade were placed under command of 161 Infantry Brigade for an attack on the Pir Panjal range 2 (Para) Madras, which was in reserve, was ordered to relieve 2/3 GR of its commitments 161 Infantry Brigade with 6 Rajputana Rifles, 2/3 GR and Sawai Man Guards were to carry out an enveloping move on the enemy's southern flank The objectives of the attack were Ledi Gali and Pir Kanthi Headquarters 77 Para Brigade with 2 (Para) Madras were ordered to protect the southern flank at Uri

THE SOUTHERN SWEEP

The task assigned to the 161 Infantry Brigade was to carry out a southern encircling move along the Pir Panjal range and get behind the enemy in Chakothi and Bandi forest area in order to facilitate the advance of the 77 Para Brigade along the main road Uri-Domel The plan was for the brigade to advance along three axes

(i) Brigade Tactical Headquarters and Sawai Man Guards to advance from Uri along the Salamabad feature-Pt 9768-Ledi Gali

(ii) 6 Rajputana Rifles to advance from Urusa-Pt 8432-Pt 9356

(iii) 2/3 GR to advance from Urusa-Pt 9108-Pir Kanthi.

The enemy had taken up strong positions at Pir Kanthi and Ledi

Gali On the three main ridges along which the advance was to take place the enemy's main positions were at Pt 9108, Pt 9356 and Pt 10658.

2/3 GR led the advance At 0600 hours on 7 June the Gorkhas left Uri by mechanical transport for Urusa Debussing at MS 62 the Gorkhas advanced along the ridge towards Pir Kanthi—commanding feature 3330 metres high The men carried heavy packs and three days' rations. It was a stiff climb and the advance was considerably slowed down At 1730 hours when the leading company (A company) and Tactical Headquarters were advancing towards Pt 9108 they encountered opposition from enemy and were subjected to 3-inch mortar and medium machine gun fire. After sustaining four casualties, A company and Tactical HQ returned at 2030 hours to area Muhri where the whole battalion was concentrated At 0900 hours on 9 June D company advanced to capture Pt 9108 followed by Tactical Headquarters and A company. The objective was captured at 1230 hours after stiff resistance. The enemy launched three powerful counter-attacks but these were beaten back The enemy suffered casualties of 15 killed and 7 wounded The Gorkha casualties were two wounded The Gorkhas captured one light machine gun, two rifles, 10 light machine gun magazines and 1000 rounds of small arms ammunition. Now the Gorkhas were in a position to advance to capture Pir Kanthi But deteriorating weather conditions and stiffening enemy resistance delayed the capture of Pir Kanthi almost to the end of June

Meanwhile 6 Rajputana Rifles made some progress B and D companies left Urusa for Pt 8432 at 1000 hours on 8 June and reached objective at 1900 hours The rest of the battalion concentrated at this feature on 11 June. The troops were subjected to medium machine gun and light machine gun fire from Pt 9356—the main enemy position 6 Rajputana Rifles consolidated Pt 8432 in order to attack Pt. 9356. Meanwhile Tactical Headquarters 161 Infantry Brigade with Sawai Man Guards less two companies left Uri at 0900 hours on 11 June in order to attack Pt 10658 which was estimated to be held by two enemy companies They reached Pt 9768 at 2100 hours on 11 June Next day the two remaining companies also moved up to Pt 9768

After these preliminary operations, a three pronged attack was made on enemy positions on 13 June—2/3 GR were to capture Pt 8570, 6 Rajputana Rifles were to seize Pt 9356 and Sawai Man Guards were to capture Pt. 10658. All the attacks were successful At 0800 hours on 13 June A and C companies 6 Rajputana Rifles advanced from Pt 8432 for the attack on Pt 9356 A company succeeded in capturing the intermediate pimple feature—but any move beyond it was subjected to heavy fire As no artillery support was available at this stage, it was decided that the assaulting companies should hold the ground gained and wait there till artillery support was made available The Battalion Headquarters and an officer of the Patiala Mountain Battery acting as

Forward Observation Officer joined the assault companies Artillery fire was soon directed on to the enemy positions and the advance was resumed To get to the objective A and C companies had to descend approximately 90 metres and ascend about 350 metres The feature was covered with pine trees that restricted the visibility to about 45 metres However, these difficulties were overcome The companies started climbing at 1500 hours, the final assault went in at 1645 hours and the objective was captured at 1715 hours The softening of the enemy position by artillery fire enabled the troops to capture the feature without much opposition The enemy was undoubtedly occupying a strong position with 40 bunkers and many slit trenches, but was unnerved by artillery fire and fled in wild confusion. Indian casualties were three wounded A and C companies consolidated their position on Pt 9356, while B company was sent out as a fighting patrol on 14 June to gain information about the enemy positions The patrol set out at 0430 hours, but at 0545 hours as they neared the objective they were subjected to heavy automatic fire Enemy attacked B company in strength A company was sent to help B company. The enemy was also harassed by artillery fire The two forward companies succeeded in securing the objective at 0900 hours In this engagement B company suffered 7 casualties—2 killed and 5 wounded. C company remained behind to hold Pt 9356 but Battalion Headquarters moved up to the newly captured feature to push on the advance to the next feature The gunner OP registered this feature Then, at 1630 hours on 14 June, A and B companies launched the assault with artillery and mortar support. The objective was gained after stiff opposition at 1800 hours. The casualties inflicted on the enemy were 10 killed and twenty wounded

At 0700 hours on 15 June, C company relieved A and B companies in order to enable them to move forward for the attack on the next feature The advance commenced at 0800 hours on 15 June Hardly had the two assaulting companies covered a distance of about 350 metres when they were held up by heavy automatic fire. After the softening of the enemy position by artillery and mortar fire the advance was resumed at 1430 hours The route from hill to hill was very dangerous and exposed to enemy fire, as it was a narrow ridge with sheer falls on either side From the commanding position at the top of the hill the enemy directed his fire at the narrow ridge along which the advance lay To Major Hoshiar Singh, commander of A company, goes the credit of neutralising the enemy fire and storming the enemy-held formidable heights He ordered five light machine guns to be put behind the trees and under cover of this terrific fire the troops infiltrated forward singly. Meanwhile the enemy made a desperate attempt to get to the rear of the advancing troops by sending a platoon through the village Dherian. The move did not succeed, for two platoons of the assaulting companies had been left in the rear to meet a possible threat. The final bayonet assault on the

feature was put in by two platoons of A company and two platoons of B company at 1700 hours on 15 June As the troops neared the top, the hostiles were demoralised and fled in wild confusion But soon they re-formed and launched a counter-attack Luckily one section 1 Mahar (MMG) had by now come up to join the two forward companies With the support of their artillery and medium machine guns the enemy swept forward in a wild attack and succeeded in knocking out the crew of the medium machine gun section One medium machine gun lost its barrel, as it was hit by an enemy shell The Indian troops, however, put up a stubborn defence, and soon the impetuosity of the attack died away. The enemy counter-attack was beaten back Indian casualties were 2 killed and 10 wounded After consolidating the position, A and B companies moved forward at 0830 hours on 17 June The objectives were captured without much opposition by 1000 hours The enemy had pulled back to his main defensive positions at Ledi Gali and Pir Kanthi

Meanwhile 2/3 Gorkha Rifles and Sawai Man Guards had also made some progress The Gorkhas captured Pt. 8570 at 1015 hours on 14 June The Gorkha position was, however, subjected to heavy medium machine gun and 3-inch mortar fire from area Raje Ka Bazaar where two enemy companies had taken up position At 1945 hours on 15 June the enemy, one company strong, attacked Pt 8570 but the Gorkhas repulsed the attack At 1800 hours on 18 June the Gorkhas captured Raje Ka Bazaar after slight opposition The enemy had fallen back on his strong defensive positions at Ledi Gali and Pir Kanthi

The Sawai Man Guards also made substantial gains Two enemy companies at Pt 10658 barred their way to Ledi Gali The opposition was overcome and Pt 10658 secured at 2230 hours on 14 June On 17 June they secured the track junction without opposition Thus all the three battalions—2/3 GR, 6 Rajputana Rifles and Sawai Man Guards—were facing the enemy positions at Pir Kanthi and Ledi Gali The Gorkhas were assigned the task of driving the enemy from his strong positions at Pir Kanthi The role of 6 Rajputana Rifles was to pass through the Gorkhas at Pir Kanthi and launch an attack on the enemy positions at Ledi Gali

As a result of personal reconnaissance, the commander of 2/3 GR came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to launch an attack from the left or centre. Therefore as a deception plan a two-company attack was launched from the left on the morning of 21 June. Henceforth till the final assault went in during night 27/28 June, all movements and activities were concentrated on the left flank (A company area) The enemy was not content to remain on the defensive but launched attack on C company during the night 22/23 June and on A and B companies during the night 23/24 June These attacks were easily repulsed On 25 June D company and Main Headquarters were moved to area village Banj Further reorganisation took place preliminary to the main attack A, B and D companies were assembled on the spur

behind C company Battalion Headquarters platoon was sent to A and C companies' position on the spur Battalion Tactical Headquarters was established on the forward position of C company

The commander of 2/3 Gorkhas planned to capture Pir Kanthi by 0500 hours on 28 June The forming up place was to be the C company area and the start time was to be 0130 hours on 28 June Artillery and mortars were to support the targets as and when required on orders of the commander of 2/3 GR

The attack went according to plan The deception plan was a success The enemy continued his normal activities i e., sniping and mortaring the left Indian position The enemy was quite unaware of the real move, and was surprised when the leading platoon of D company reached about 90 metres from the objective Then the hostiles opened up with all the weapons they had But the unexpected arrival of the Gorkhas had demoralised them, and after a short but fierce struggle the Gorkhas secured and consolidated the objective by 0530 hours on 28 June The Gorkha casualties were 11 killed and 51 wounded The enemy casualties were 84 killed and 40 wounded Two of the enemy were taken prisoner A large quantity of equipment/stores/ammunition was captured The enemy, comprising A and C companies of the 3rd Battalion Bagh Brigade, two platoons of Pak Army and one hundred Pathans had taken up position on a commanding feature, and if they had not been taken in by the feint attack they would have put up a stubborn defence Luckily the deception plan worked and the Gorkhas secured the vital feature As soon as Pir Kanthi was captured Sawai Man Guards were pushed through to capture Ledi Gali, and they did so the same day. On 29 June the reorganisation and consolidation of the newly captured positions was carried out

FAILURE TO FORCE THE HAJI PIR PASS

While 161 Infantry Brigade made a successful southern sweep towards the Pir Panjal range, 77 Para Brigade guarded Uri and the line of communication and at the same time made a bold, though unsuccessful effort to force the Haji Pir Pass

The formidable task of driving the enemy from the Haji Pir Pass was assigned to 2 (Para) Madras The Haji Pir Pass, situated 22 km south of Uri along the road Uri-Punch, was dominated on either side by two high ridges This pass connected two roads—one running north to south from Uri to Punch, and the other running west to east There were two more small tracks which wound up the pass The feature just north of the pass was covered with thick jungle. The enemy, estimated to be two battalions, was well dug in all along the ridges He was believed to have 12 medium machine guns The approach to the pass was covered by the enemy on the east from Kiran feature and on the west from the ridge The pass could not be approached from the left or the right flanks, as there was a deep *Nala* to descend and then a very steep hill to climb on

either side The only possible approach was along the road and then cutting across from milestone 13 The road was motorable only up to milestone 5, with the result that supplies had to be manhandled for a distance of 13 km.

At 0700 hours on 7 June, D company of 2 (Para) Madras advanced from Uri along the road leading to Punch The company swept the area up to milestone 8, and finding it clear of the enemy, rested there for the night At 1100 hours on 8 June D company resumed its advance towards Haji Pir Pass At about 1300 hours, when the company had just passed milestone 11 and was about to cross the *Nala*, the bridge of which was broken, it was fired upon B company which had been following behind, soon joined up with D company The enemy, estimated to be a platoon strong, was well covering the *Nala* by fire. As it was getting dark it was decided to establish a firm base in area milestone 11. Tactical Headquarters also moved up to this area. On 9 June patrols were sent out and they brought the information that the enemy was moving out of its first position and establishing himself in well-built bunkers behind At 0600 hours on 10 June a platoon of D company launched the attack on the bunkers After offering some opposition the enemy fled into the jungles A firm base was then established in this area

On 11 June vigorous patrolling was carried out in the jungles around the firm base. Except for some ineffective sniping, no enemy movement was observed On 12 June patrols sent out along the road were heavily fired upon from ridge Six to eight enemy bunkers were observed on the ridge C company also moved up to join the leading two companies in order to take part in the operations

At 1530 hours on 13 June, C and D companies launched the attack on the Haji Pir Pass, while B company served as a firm base, picketing the high features around and guarding the rear of the line of communication When the assaulting companies reached milestone 13 they were held up by heavy light machine gun and medium machine gun fire from the ridges on either side of the pass. So completely was the road dominated by enemy held features and so effectively was the pass covered by the enemy that no amount of exertion on the part of the Madrasis to force the pass or to outflank it was of any avail After a struggle, which lasted for four hours, the companies withdrew to the firm base

Intensive patrolling continued throughout 14 and 15 June It was then decided to launch an attack at dawn on 16 June. This time the assaulting companies were supported by more fire power, as a section of Patiala Mountain Battery was in support of the companies Two more of the battalion mortars moved up, thus making a total of 4 mortars. The operation was to be carried out in two phases In the first phase ridge 'A' was to be captured, with C company advancing from the left flank and D company from the right In the second phase, attack was to be launched on ridge 'B' from ridge 'A'—the firm base Preliminary to the attack

Notes

1 Gen Thimayya feels that the main mistake of the battalion was not to have carried full-scale ammunition for the guns, which ran short of it in the middle of the fight

contour. The latter was overlooked by Pt 9444, but as the number of troops was not adequate for manning many picquets, Pt. 9444 was not occupied. Besides occupying the ridge across the Kishanganga, which dominated Tithwal, an attempt was made to secure Richhmar Gali and Mir Kalsi ridge to serve as a springboard for the advance towards Muzaffarabad. The enemy sharply reacted to this move and offered stubborn opposition to 1 Sikh in their advance towards Mir Kalsi On 28 May 1948, B and C companies 1 Sikh moved forward to occupy Richhmar Gali (or Pt 7895). The companies met heavy opposition and due to a very difficult terrain could not reach their objective On 30 May, A company plus two platoons of D company were sent to reinforce the forward companies This co-ordinated effort finally resulted in the capture of the objective. Enemy counter-attacks were beaten back and the position was consolidated At 0430 hours on 31 May, B company pushed on to secure the second objective—Pt 7802 The objective was captured at 1030 hours after fierce opposition D company then pushed on through B company to secure the third objective, Pir Saheba The advance was held up due to stiff opposition Pir Saheba was captured at 0600 hours on 1 June after the enemy had withdrawn The Mir Kalsi ridge was captured without opposition at 0915 hours on 1 June. Thus after five days of bitter fighting 1 Sikh succeeded not only in occupying Richhmar Gali but also the Mir Kalsi ridge, which were vital for the defence of Tithwal and of great value for any further operations against the enemy.

As the Mir Kalsi ridge was of vital importance, the enemy made a determined effort to recapture it On 2 and 3 June, the ridge was heavily shelled and mortared So terrific was the fire that the forward company on the Mir Kalsi ridge got no time to prepare proper bunkers or wire their position While the enemy heavily shelled the forward positions, he also brought in considerable reinforcements After softening up the forward positions with artillery fire the hostiles launched a vigorous offensive at dawn on 4 June to recapture the Mir Kalsi ridge The approaches to the Indian picquet were covered with big boulders and the ground lent itself advantageously to the enemy Making good use of this cover, the enemy stealthily and warily approached the picquet.

The first sign of the enemy's presence was noticed when the sentry saw two Verey red lights suddenly in the air He gave the alarm, but by the time the men could get into their positions, a heavy concentration of 3.7-inch howitzers, 3-inch mortars and machine guns poured down on the forward picquet and all along the battalion positions Shelling was so intense that men could not lift their heads above the trenches Communications were completely cut; the platoon was isolated and surrounded from two flanks by the enemy, who was now barely 22 metres away from the forward trenches At this crisis Jemadar Harchand Singh ordered his men to hold their fire and to deal with the enemy with grenades and bayonets It was a weird scene and with wild

cries of 'Allah Hu Akbar' and 'Sat Sri Akal' the attackers and the defenders closed in to decide the issue of the battle. In a wild rush the enemy swept forward and succeeded in occupying two of No.2 platoon's forward trenches, which had been vacated by the section patrol that had earlier gone out One enemy Bren gunner firing from the hip, came within 10 metres, defying all grenades and fire from the platoon Luckily this troublesome enemy was swiftly dealt with by Jemadar Harchand Singh who shot him dead with his pistol

Another enemy Bren gunner was advancing from another flank, blazing his Bren off from the hip Sepoy Zail Singh engaged this enemy with his gun and shot him dead Zail Singh was hit by a burst of the enemy Bren in the left thigh. But unmindful of his shattered leg he crawled forward, snatched the enemy Bren gun and brought it back to his platoon position before he was killed by a burst which hit him in the stomach

The attacking force was over 200 strong against the small platoon picquet of 23 Further, the enemy had two companies in reserve at the foot of the ridge, ready to exploit the situation Their role was, if the picquet position was overrun, to rush the Indian gun position, hardly 270 metres behind the picquet The gunners were rather apprehensive and had kept the guns ready to be destroyed and had removed the vital parts

At this critical moment, Jemadar Harchand Singh organised a section for a counter-attack The enemy by now had suffered heavy casualties and was rather demoralised by the stubborn resistance The vigorous counter-attack still further demoralised the enemy and thinking discretion the better part of valour, he fled in wild confusion, hotly pursued by some of the Indian troops It was after two hours of grim struggle that the small garrison of the picquet asserted its supremacy This spirited action had such a tremendous effect that in spite of the fact that the Mir Kalsi ridge was of vital importance to the defence of Tithwal, the enemy never attempted to launch a large scale attack from this flank. The total enemy casualties were 23 killed and not less than 30 wounded Nine of these dead bodies were collected by a patrol that went out immediately after this action These were identified as Pathans and regular troops In addition to this one Bren gun, 3 rifles (303), one pistol, 1300 rounds of ammunition and other stores and equipment were captured. The casualties suffered by the picquet were only 1 killed and 3 wounded

Having inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy in the spirited action of the Mir Kalsi ridge on 4 June, steps were taken to strengthen the defences of Tithwal by capturing Keran 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles, who had moved to Tithwal on 26 May to do garrison duties, spared two companies for the capture of Keran At 2300 hours on 9 June the column of C and D companies 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles started under cover of darkness along the track, which wound along the Kishanganga,

to capture Keran and establish a company of J & K Militia despatched from Shulur via Pharkian ki Gali to Keran. The column captured Keran without opposition at 0800 hours on 11 June. The Garhwalis, after establishing the Militia company, which arrived at 1700 hours, returned to Shulur and Tithwal

Meanwhile, having failed to capture the Mir Kalsi ridge, the enemy made a determined effort to capture the nearby ring contour This picquet was held by troops of 1 Madras. The attack was launched at 0545 hours on 11 June The enemy was estimated to be 300 strong. The attack was well planned and preceded by heavy concentration of gun and mortar fire Visibility was very poor due to low clouds. Enemy advance was covered by one party with medium machine gun and 6 Bren guns at Chunj and another party with 5 Bren guns at a track—*Nala* junction The hostiles approached within 27 metres of the picquet, blasting out the roof of one of the bunkers with 4 Bren guns. The Madrasis in bunkers, though wounded, kept on firing and did not let the enemy come near them. The enemy charged but was caught in the mines and the hail of small arms fire Timely reinforcement from picquet Pt. 7229 helped the Madrasis to gain the upper hand and the enemy beat a hasty retreat. Two enemy counter-attacks were beaten back with heavy losses, 15 dead hostiles being recovered from among the mines A patrol sent out to chase the enemy recovered 7 more, besides arms and ammunition

Not content to remain on the defensive, 163 Infantry Brigade made a bold bid to liquidate opposition in the area of the Mir Kalsi ridge. Two enemy companies were reported to be dug in area Mussargutte ridge with forward defended localities extending to places opposite Mir Kalsi Approximately five 3-inch mortars were also located in this area Ridges Jabri, Pirhian and Kanur were also reported to be held by enemy. Some parties of the enemy were still lurking north of the river Kishanganga in area Pt 9444 and Balgiran Brigadier Harbakhsh Singh, therefore, decided to reconnoitre in force area Pt 7902, Mussargutte, Naoseri and ridges west of Khole, and destroy any enemy encountered

As planned, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles arrived at Pir Saheba at 1200 hours on 16 June At 2030 hours they moved forward to their objective, with A company leading, followed by Tactical Headquarters, B and C companies The plan was to establish a firm base with Tactical Headquarters and A company at Takia Seru if no opposition was encountered and to let B and C companies to pass through and exploit to Pt. 8754, Pt. 7902 and Mussargutte The route to be followed was via Nara and Pt 4400 By very difficult and steep climbing the Garhwalis arrived at Takia Seru at 0415 hours on 17 June The enemy sentry challenged the leading scout, and was killed. The Garhwalis hurled grenades into the houses in which one enemy platoon was sleeping The grenades and the small arms fire took a heavy toll—20 hostiles were killed and 2 captured Of the latter, one died later of wounds Hardly

had the enemy opposition in Takia Seru been liquidated when the forward Garhwali company came under heavy medium machine gun and Bren gun fire from enemy who had taken up strong positions at Pt. 8754, Pt 7902 and Mussargutte At the same time the Sikh position was subjected to heavy concentrations of gun and mortar fire The forward Garhwali company charged and drove the enemy out of Bani Piles of arms and ammunition found in one house indicated Bani to be the enemy's company headquarters The hostiles rallied and counter-attacked three times, but failed to recapture Bani But on account of the prolonged struggle the pouch ammunition of the Garhwalis was exhausted Replenishment was not possible as the porters carrying reserve ammunition had run away, leaving their load far behind The forward company was, therefore, ordered to withdraw to base, lay-backs being formed by C company It was a difficult task, especially to remove the casualties But in spite of enemy's efforts to cut off withdrawal by shelling and mortaring, the task was well accomplished The Garhwalis returned to Pir Saheba by 1500 hours The enemy casualties were 40 killed and a large number wounded The casualties of the Garhwalis were 6 killed and 18 wounded

SETBACK ALONG THE KISHANGANGA

The build-up of the enemy forces continued. All bridges between Keran and Tithwal were destroyed to prevent the enemy crossing from west of the river Kishanganga. Nevertheless, with the gradual build-up of his forces, the enemy became aggressive On 24 June, two enemy parties of approximately hundred each attacked the Indian positions across the Kishanganga—Pt 7229 and ring contour—under cover of heavy high explosive and smoke mortar fire At the same time, enemy heavily mortared Tithwal and directed small arms fire on the position at Reali from Chilehana This attack was repulsed with the support of artillery and mortar fire The intensity of the enemy attack can be gathered from the fact that, in one and a half hours, the enemy mortars fired 120 bombs Henceforth the shelling of Tithwal increased in intensity. Consequently the Brigade Headquarters moved behind the Tithwal ridge to Dringla area Patrol clashes became almost an every-day affair. Machine gunning and direct shelling with anti-tank guns on the ring contour picquet from Pt 9444, and mortaring and shelling of 1 Madras Tactical Headquarters, continued throughout the day Early in July the disposition of the Indian troops in Tithwal was as follows:

(a) 1 Madras
- (i) B company, section medium machine gun - Pt 7229
- (ii) A company less 1 platoon, section 3-inch mortar - Ring Contour
- (iii) Platoon A company - Reali

(iv) D company, section 3-inch mortar and section medium machine gun	- Tithwal ridge
(v) Platoon C company, section 3-inch mortar	- Pt 5905
(vi) Platoon C company	- Pimple
(vii) C company less 2 platoons	- Beari
(viii) Section mountain battery	- Jarara
(ix) 3-inch mortar platoon less 2 sections	- With Battalion Tactical Headquarters
(x) Section mountain battery	- Nearby

(b) 1 Sikh
Beari, Richmand feature, excluding Richhmar Gali

(c) 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles
in reserve

Enemy showed great tactical ability in launching the attack on the ring contour on 8 July. By a clever ruse he succeeded in playing on Indian fears that an enemy counter-attack was about to be made against Keran, 40 km north of Tithwal On 7 July, 2 companies of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles concentrated in Kopwara in preparation for the advance on Shardi at first light on 8 July. This column had hardly reached Kalarauch on 8 July when it was recalled on news that the ring contour had been overrun by the hostiles It hurried back to Tithwal and reached there at 1800 hours on 9 July.

The enemy attack on ring contour was preceded by heavy mortaring and shelling for full three days About 400 shells a day burst on this vital area Pt 9444, a commanding feature overlooking the ring contour picquet had not been occupied, with the result that the enemy gained complete surprise when he launched the attack from this feature at 0445 hours on 8 July. The hostiles, approximately two battalions strong, launched a vigorous attack, supported by 2 mortars and 2 medium machine guns After subjecting the ring contour and Pt 7229 to a heavy fire for thirty minutes, the enemy surged forward for the attack The heavy shelling (it is estimated that about a thousand shells burst in the picquet area) and the impetuosity of the attack seem to have demoralised the defenders, and though they offered some resistance the picquet was overrun. A platoon from Pt 7229 sent to reinforce the ring contour was intercepted by enemy machine guns and mortars and could not proceed The machine gun section at Pt. 7229, however, rendered valuable service, for under cover of the medium machine gun fire the Madrasis withdrew from ring contour to the False Crest. This withdrawal was completed by 0730 hours. Meanwhile B company at Pt. 7229 was offering stubborn resistance to the enemy attack. The question whether a counter-attack should be launched to recover ring contour was

seriously considered Unless ring contour was recaptured, there was the possibility of all the troops across the Kishanganga being cut to pieces, the section of mountain guns at Jarara would also be cut off if B company withdrew from Pt 7229 immediately The Brigade Commander, who was away enroute to Srinagar, was contacted and apprised of the situation He left the decision to the Commanding Officer of 1 Madras The latter decided to recapture ring contour A counter-attack was planned and air strike was asked for at 1430 hours that day. D company was moved from the Tithwal ridge and sent across the Kishanganga with a section of medium machine guns and sufficient ammunition including 3-inch mortar bombs A three-company attack on the ring contour was to be led by the Commanding Officer himself The air strike, however, did not materialize until after 1630 hours when it was too late to put in such a difficult counter-attack up the steep slopes against great odds In the meantime, the mountain guns at Jarara were withdrawn behind Tithwal When it was known that the air strike would not be available, the Brigade Commander came on the line again and ordered the withdrawal of all troops west of the Kishanganga and the blowing up of the suspension bridge across the river

The withdrawal of troops from across the Kishanganga was a difficult operation but was successfully carried out B company at Pt 7229 by repeated counter-attacks pinned down the enemy D company took up an intermediate position at the False Crest to cover the withdrawal of A and B companies The withdrawal was effected without any mishap All heavy arms, equipment and stores were safely withdrawn It was only at 0900 hours on 9 July that the enemy discovered that Pt 7229 had been evacuated Enemy occupied this feature and fired 2 green Verey light—their success signal

Eight platoons, however, were still across the Kishanganga, where D company on False Crest was holding the enemy at bay By this time all machine guns were brought into position on the Tithwal ridge, covering the forward slopes of the hills across the river Soon after 1030 hours commander of D company reported large numbers of enemy converging on the False Crest from both the flanks Movement across the only bridge available was difficult, as the enemy was covering the bridge and the Command Post was constantly under artillery and mortar fire However one of the fighter planes came to the rescue at 1200 hours on 9 July The aircraft kept on strafing the enemy for nearly 20 minutes This opportunity was seized by the Commanding Officer to withdraw the platoons, one after another, in quick time The platoons made a very successful withdrawal and managed to reel up even the signal cable as they came doubling across the bridge Indian casualties were 13 killed and 38 wounded It was estimated that the enemy suffered 460 casualties

Having carried out a successful withdrawal, the next task was to blow up the bridge The sappers had been ordered to prepare the main

Kishanganga bridge for demolition The bridge was under enemy mortar fire. Four sappers were killed by a mortar bomb while laying the charge on the bridge The bridge was not completely blown in the first attempt. Another charge was put and it was blown completely

After this the Commanding Officer 1 Madras ordered two platoons of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles and a Pioneer section to blow up all the wooden bridges along the track skirting the river Kishanganga from the stream/river junction to Jarara, where some artillery ammunition was still to be brought back When these two platoons proceeded to carry out their task, a platoon of enemy medium machine gun from Pt. 7229 opened fire on them and they had to make a rapid withdrawal The track and the bridge across the stream were still intact Orders were, therefore, issued to keep a Pioneer party ready with explosives to take advantage of the arrival on the scene of a fighter plane At 1700 hours a fighter plane came and strafed the enemy positions The opportunity was taken to blow up this bridge also. Thus was finally completed a very arduous but successful withdrawal under heavy pressure of the enemy

It was a serious setback, not only were all the forward positions across the Kishanganga evacuated but 1 Sikh also withdrew from their positions on the Mir Kalsi ridge and Pt 7802 The Officer Commanding 1 Madras alleged that the disaster was mainly due to the tactical blunders and administrative failures of the Brigade Headquarters It was a tactical blunder not to have occupied Pt. 9444. The administrative failures were mainly two—failure to provide wire for the ring contour position and lack of adequate reserves The Brigade Major of 163 Infantry Brigade not only denied these allegations but also asserted that it was due to the demoralisation of the troops concerned that the vital position was lost Gen Thimayya soothed the ruffled feelings and frayed nerves by his judicious decision holding no one guilty for the setback

NEW SITUATIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS

The loss of the Indian positions across the Kishanganga and the build-up of enemy forces in the Uri sector necessitated a review of the situation. General Thimayya's appreciation of the situation succinctly summed up the various problems which confronted him His main object was to consolidate his existing position from Tithwal to Chakothi and to prevent the enemy from infiltrating into the Kashmir Valley from this or any other direction The area between Tithwal and the Jhelum was divided from east to west by a massive mountain range starting approximately from Pt 10147, known as the Kafir Khan range This mountainous mass offered many avenues of approach to enemy infiltrating parties The main pass through the Kafir Khan range was Reshian Gali General Thimayya's conclusion was that the best way for him to dominate this area (Tithwal to Chakothi) was to hold the ridge running south from the Kishanganga, Pt. 7802 to Kafir Khan peak and the high ground between the range and the Jhelum. The northern

following tasks.

(i) To secure Pt 10490 and Pt. 9178 and prevent enemy infiltration towards the east in this area

(ii) To secure the ridge from Pt 6450 to Pir Kanthi and prevent infiltration of the enemy towards the east from the west and south

(iii) To protect the line of communication between milestone 60 and Baramula

(c) Gurais and Zoji La areas

77 Para Brigade (four battalions, one field battery, one battery mountain artillery) was to (i) secure Gurais and prevent enemy infiltration towards Bandipur, and (ii) secure Zoji La and prevent infiltration of the enemy to the west.

(d) Divisional reserve

(i) 7 Cavalry at Baramula

(ii) One infantry battalion to be placed in Handwara-Kopwara area.

On the basis of this appreciation General Thimayya issued instructions on 10 July for the reorganisation of Srinagar Division 77 Para Brigade under Brig H L Atal was to take over Gurais and Zoji La areas. Its tasks were—(i)to secure Gurais and prevent enemy infiltration towards Bandipur, and (ii) to secure Zoji La and prevent enemy infiltration from the west 2 (Para) Madras, 1 Grenadiers, 2/4 Gorkha Rifles, 1 Patiala and ancillary troops were to be under command.

161 Infantry Brigade (Brig Henderson Brooks) was to take over Uri-Chakothi area. Its tasks were—(i) to secure position astride road Uri-Domel at approximately milestone 60, northern flank Pt 9178 and southern to Pir Kanthi, and (ii) to protect the line of communication between milestone 60 and Baramula The following troops were to be under command[1].-

7 Sikh
2 Dogra
4 Kumaon
2 Bihar
2/3 GR
Sawai Man Guards
1 Battalion J&K Militia
Two platoons MMG
11 Field Regiment less one battery
One section Patiala Mountain Battery
One troop 37 Anti-Tank Battery
60 Para Field Ambulance
One section 121 Infantry Workshop Company

163 Infantry Brigade (Brig Harbakhsh Singh) was to be responsible for Tithwal area The following troops were to be under command·

1 Madras
6 Rajputana Rifles

1 Sikh
3 Royal Garhwal Rifles
7 Kashmir Infantry less one company
2 Battalion J & K Militia
One platoon MMG
J & K Mountain Battery
33 Field Ambulance
One section 140 Infantry Workshop Company

General Thimayya's appreciation highlighted the difficulties with which he was faced in guarding a long, straggling and vulnerable forward defence line with inadequate forces Regular Pakistan troops were now openly taking part in the operations in a big way. The temper of the enemy was unmistakable, he was becoming more and more aggressive After having gained a victory in the Tithwal area, the enemy turned his attention to the Chakothi area. His efforts bore fruit and he gained another significant victory on 23 July 1948 by driving 2 Bihar from Pandu—the commanding feature which dominated the road Uri-Domel In the meantime the hostiles kept up pressure in the Tithwal sector

STIFF FIGHTING IN TITHWAL SECTOR

After the loss of the forward positions across the river Kishanganga, 1 Madras took up defensive positions on the Tithwal ridge 6 Rajputana Rifles moved from Uri to Tithwal and came under command 163 Infantry Brigade on 10 July. Thus strengthened, 163 Infantry Brigade assumed the offensive The main task was to sweep away enemy from the ridge which stretched towards Raniwala Dana The task of 6 Rajputana Rifles was to capture the two ring contours Between the assembly area and the objective there was a deep *Nala* over which the Engineers were required to build a bridge. The bridge was scheduled to be ready by the evening of 11 July, but this task could not be completed in time The Engineers, however, managed to put a log across the *Nala* B and D companies with a modified Battalion Headquarters 6 Raj Rif left Chhamkot at 2115 hours on 11 July and managed to cross over the log of wood B company, leading the advance, captured one feature at 0530 hours on 12 July without opposition D company then passed through and secured the objective at 0700 hours B company then pushed through and secured the next objective at 1000 hours 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles had a more difficult task Two companies were to pass through the forward positions secured by 6 Rajputana Rifles and hammer at strong enemy defensive positions The two companies of Garhwalis encountered opposition but secured both the preliminary objectives Two companies of 6 Rajputana Rifles moved up in support At the next objective of the Garhwalis the enemy was well entrenched and offered strong opposition The Garhwalis launched the attack at

0100 hours on 15 July B company 6 Rajputana Rifles lent valuable support The opposition was liquidated and arms and ammunition captured At 0400 hours the enemy launched a counter-attack on B company 6 Rajputana Rifles, well co-ordinated with 3-inch mortar support. The attack was repulsed

From reconnaissance reports it appeared that enemy was strongly holding a high feature whose capture for further advance was essential Further ahead was another feature held in strength by the enemy 6 Rajputana Rifles were given the task of securing these two features D company was charged with the task of securing the first feature and C company the second after D company had carried out its task B company was held in reserve D company attacked the first feature at 0130 hours on 18 July The path leading from the forward position to the first feature was about one metre wide with sheer falls on either side From 5 bunkers along this narrow path the enemy well covered the path As D company advanced along this path it was subjected to heavy automatic fire—3 medium machine guns fixed on this bottleneck and supported by small arms fire, hand and rifle grenades, 2-inch and 3-inch mortars From the terrific fire which pinned down D company it was obvious that the hostiles had a listening post in one of these bunkers Within half an hour of their being held up, D company suffered 51 casualties It was at this crisis that sepoy Piru Singh won immortal fame by the supreme heroism he displayed He was with the leading section More than half of the section was mowed down by the terrific fire But he rushed forward to deal with the nearest medium machine gun post, though grenade splinters ripped his clothes and wounded him He despatched the crew with his sten gun thus silencing the troublesome machine gun He moved forward to attack a second medium machine gun post A grenade was thrown at him and wounded him in the face Slowly he crawled out of the trench hurling grenades at the next enemy post As he was coming out of the second trench to go to the third he was hit on the head by a bullet But before he fell down dead he had succeeded in hurling a grenade in the trench, causing heavy losses to the enemy By his heroic courage Piru Singh leapt into fame and was awarded Param Vir Chakra posthumously

When D company was held up, C company was ordered to push through to liquidate enemy opposition The fire was so heavy that within 15 minutes of their advance C company suffered 25 casualties The two forward companies were, therefore, pulled back to their original positions by 0500 hours In this severe engagement 6 Rajputana Rifles suffered 80 casualties—15 killed, 58 wounded and 7 missing The hostiles also suffered heavy casualties, but the exact numbers were not known due to darkness

Next the enemy tried to drive out 1 Sikh from the forward positions in area Richhmar Gali. At 0600 hours on 20 July, two enemy companies attacked A company position, supported by heavy concentrations of

artillery and mortar fire Approximately 200 rounds were counted on the position attacked A platoon of C company was sent to reinforce A company The struggle for supermacy lasted for four hours before the Indian troops gained the upper hand The hostiles retired in confusion after having sustained heavy casualties—30 killed and 60 wounded

THE LOSS OF PANDU

Meanwhile the enemy build-up had been continuing in the Chakothi sector. One regular Pakistan Army battalion, one company machine gun and 3000 Pathans were deployed north of the Jhelum Three Pakistan battalions, one troop armoured cars, one field battery, one mountain battery, two anti-aircraft guns and one company machine gun were disposed between Chakothi and Pir Panjal range One Azad Kashmir battalion and 500 Pathans were deployed on Pir Panjal range west of Ledi Gali One Pakistan Army battalion (unconfirmed), one Bagh battalion, and 2000 Pathans were also deployed on Pir Panjal range including Haji Pir Pass From the second week of June 1948 the enemy became more aggressive and the tempo of his attacks increased until they culminated in the capture of Pandu on 23 July 1948.

4 Kumaon were guarding the vital area of Pandu On 8 June two companies of 2 Dogra came under command and thus strengthened the forward troops in this important sector. Indian troops at Pt. 6878 and Kathai (which was like a dagger pointed at the heart of the enemy positions) were the first to be subjected to enemy attacks. On 6 June enemy attempted to attack Pt 6878 and Kathai under cover of artillery fire Enemy shelled the Battalion Main Headquarters with 3.7-inch howitzers. Approximately fifty shells were fired The Dogra Company (under command) was sent to raid a hillock and captured it after stiff opposition at 0830 hours on 18 June. The casualties of the Dogras were 3 killed and 3 wounded Enemy casualties were estimated at 16 killed and 30 wounded

It was a heartening success, but soon the enemy gained the upper hand by ambushing a party of Indian troops proceeding from Pandu to Pt. 10490 on 19 June on a reconnaissance mission. The party, consisting of the Commanding Officer (Lieut-Colonel M M. Khanna), the Signal Officer (Subedar Mohan Singh) Tactical Headquarters, one section defence platoon and one medium machine gun, including the personnel to handle it (total 23), in addition to civilian porters carrying rations and ammunition, left Pandu at 0830 hours The line of communication from Pandu to Pt. 10490, having been in use for nearly a fortnight, was considered quite safe However, all the necessary precautions were taken These precautions, however, proved of no avail The enemy lay in ambush in area Khatrnar, an ideal site for ambush—an open bit of ground covered with tall maize plants on both the sides and surrounded by thick jungles on high ground A wooden bridge spanned the Kathai *Nala* The party reached the area at 1230 hours. It was rather warm and

so the coolies took off their heavy loads and reclined under the shady trees The men were about to take their meals when one of the sentries noticed some movement and immediately fired. Next moment the enemy (two companies strong), who had covered the area from all the four sides, subjected the party to a heavy fire The ground did not provide any cover. The enemy rushed forward and charged the party with the bayonets The surprise of the attack, the lack of cover, the superior numbers of the enemy, led to the destruction of the party Though taken quite unawares the party fought well and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, 30 bodies being recovered later But it was a hopeless struggle and resistance was soon at an end Indian losses were 13 killed and 3 wounded, including the Commanding Officer The enemy did not stay long and disappeared with the booty of arms, ammunition and equipment [2]

Encouraged by this success the enemy became bolder and on 26 June, enemy 3 7-inch howitzers shelled Battalion Main Headquarters. On 1 July the hostiles launched a vigorous attack on the forward positions At 0430 hours enemy shelled Pandu, Pt 6878 and Kathai Under cover of the artillery fire an attack was launched at 0515 hours on these three positions After a struggle which lasted till 1000 hours, the attack was beaten off At 1830 hours enemy recommenced shelling, this proved to be the prelude to an enemy attack on Pt 10490 at 2200 hours The attack was repulsed On 2 July the enemy made determined attacks on the forward positions The attack on Pandu, Pt. 6878 and Kathai was fierce and prolonged It began at 0510 hours, under cover of artillery fire, and lasted till 1400 hours At 1730 hours the enemy attack on Pt. 10490 was repulsed Enemy fired seventy 3 7-inch howitzer shells Not only did 4 Kumaon hold their own but they also took a heavy toll of the enemy—41 killed and wounded in area Pt 10490 and 38 killed and wounded in area Pt 6878 and Kathai Although the attacks were repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy, it was obvious from reconnaissance reports that he was rushing reinforcements for a final bid for victory Not only was the enemy deployed in strength in Chinari area for launching the attack on Indian forward positions, but his howitzer was firing heavy shells to which the defenders had no answer At 1800 hours on 4 July, enemy fired twelve 3 7-inch howitzer shells on Pandu, Pt. 6878 and Kathai Then, just at a time when the tempo of enemy attacks was increasing, 4 Kumaon were relieved on 5/6 July by 2 Bihar. 2 Bihar was a comparatively raw battalion.

During night 20/21 July enemy put down heavy fire on Pandu feature, hitting with 200 25-pounder shells the forward positions. At 0330 hous on 21 July, enemy launched an attack in strength. A double pronged attack was made One enemy battalion infiltrated via Kathai *Nala* to Chakhama and occupied the track junction and launched attacks on Pandu feature and B company's position The other enemy battalion moved south from Kathai to Maira and north-east along *Nala*

leading to Pt 9178 i.e , the Pandu feature On account of this double pronged attack the forward companies of 2 Bihar (D and C companies) occupying Pt 6873 and the spur were isolated, and it was only after a prolonged struggle that they joined Battalion Headquarters at Pandu at 1900 hours B company too failed to hold its ground against hordes of enemy and withdrew to Pandu at 2000 hours. Throughout the day the Battalion Headquarters was subjected to heavy 25-pounder and medium gun fire, approximately 400 shells being fired during the day It was a gruelling time, but although the companies failed to hold their forward positions, the main position at Pandu held firm Thrice did the enemy make determined efforts to capture this vital position and thrice was he hurled back with heavy losses The enemy was, however, determined to recapture Pandu, and launched two more attacks during the early hours of the morning The Biharis fought with grim resolution and beat back the attacks Then the enemy changed his tactics, and decided to soften further the main position at Pandu by artillery fire. From 1200 hours on 22 July he began to use heavy 4 2-inch mortars from close range throwing 250 25-pounder and 100 mortar bombs The Indian supporting arms effectively engaged enemy concentration of three companies at Kathai and one company at Bandi Chakkan and heavy guns put down harassing fire at Pt 9178 which had been occupied by one enemy company. The hostiles had received more reinforcements, and deployed one brigade now in the bid to capture Pandu. The persistence with which enemy hammered at the Indian positions bore fruit at last, and on 23 July Pandu feature fell into his hands The attack on that day was preceded by heavy fire pulverising the defences Enemy opened up with medium guns and also 4 2-inch mortars before launching the attack at 0800 hours on 23 July under cover of this heavy fire 2 Bihar put up resistance, but their ammunition, it was claimed, ran short and at 2030 hours the battalion withdrew to Uri, reaching there at 1400 hours on 24 July [3] As a result, two companies of 2 Dogra, which had been holding Pt 10490 and were isolated, withdrew to Chinal Dori The remaining companies of 2 Dogra at Nandi were shelled and sniped by enemy from Nandi I, and withdrew to Mahura at 2000 hours on 23 July. Two companies of 7 Sikh were holding Chhota Kazinag 1 Royal Garhwal Rifles, just arrived at Uri, proceeded to Chinal Dori and Chhota Kazinag Thus 2 companies 7 Sikh and 1 Royal Garhwal Rifles were assigned the task of stemming the enemy advance from Pandu towards Mahura

The loss of Pandu was a serious setback. Coming as it did after the loss of the positions across the Kishanganga in Tithwal area, it showed the dangers of self-complacency. The temper of the enemy was unmistakable. He was becoming more and more aggressive Two major victories in quick succession helped to raise his morale considerably. The Indian casualties had been fairly heavy—24 killed, 32 wounded and 11 missing Arms and equipment left behind included among others

1 medium machine gun, 5 Bren guns, 12 Sten guns, 460 Bren magazine, 94 Sten magazine, 25 bayonets, etc.

Causes of the serious Indian reverses in the Tithwal and Uri sectors are not difficult to see. The battle fronts were close to the main bases and supply depots of the hostiles, making it much easier for them to reinforce and maintain their troops. Pakistan Army formations were thrown into the battle openly and in considerable strength, from at least May 1948 according to Pakistan's own admission. Heavy weapons like 4.2-inch mortars, 3.7-inch howitzers and even medium guns were deployed against the Indian positions.[4] Their continual shelling over several days pulverised and smothered the Indian positions. Thimayya had no effective answer to the heavy and much superior fire-power of the enemy. Reinforcements also were not available to him due to the projected requirements of the Police Action against Hyderabad, which appeared imminent. The Indian troops holding the forward positions across the Kishanganga and on Pandu had to take heavy punishment from the superior fire-power and numbers of the enemy almost passively, without having any means of hitting back effectively. Such a situation could not last indefinitely. Exceptional skill and bravery of the local commanders might have delayed or averted the reverses. But exceptional skill or bravery cannot be always commanded in war. What happened was, therefore, in a sense inevitable.

STABILISING THE POSITION

After the major reverse at Pandu, three important problems came to the forefront:

(i) The strategic problem viz., whether to hold on to the existing forward positions or to pull back to strong defensive positions at Tithwal and Uri.

(ii) The problem of reinforcements viz., whether it would be wise to rush reinforcements from East Punjab Area to Jammu and Kashmir, weakening the defences of the Punjab, especially at a time when the Hyderabad cauldron was near boiling.

(iii) The problem of raising the morale of the Indian troops.

General Thimayya turned his attention to the first problem. In order to decide whether it would be desirable to defend the existing forward positions or move back to the strongly defended locality of Uri he tried to visualise the likely course of enemy action. With the build-up of enemy forces in Chakothi area the initiative had obviously passed to the enemy. There were a number of alternatives open to the enemy. The first alternative was to put in an attack north of the Jhelum with the object of cutting the line of communication between Rampur and Uri and attacking Uri from the rear. There was also the possibility of developing this offensive into a two-pronged attack, one coming from the east and the other from the west. There were, however, serious limitations to such an offensive. It was a difficult country to operate in

With a precarious line of communication, it would not be possible for the enemy to maintain a large number of troops Moreover, there was a physical obstacle, the Jhelum, which he must cross to make his attack really effective The greatest danger was that his force would be isolated if there was a long delay in the link-up between these troops and others coming along the main road from Chakothi side. In view of these serious difficulties, the enemy was not likely to adopt this course.

His second alternative was to send a force along Kafir Khan range to Handwara valley with a view to disrupting communications of 163 Infantry Brigade This offensive could be only on a small scale due to long and difficult line of communication The third alternative, of putting in an attack on Uri, south from Haji Pir Pass area would have certain advantages It would isolate the forward Indian positions in Urusa-Pir Kanthi area It would have the further advantage of achieving surprise and hitting the weak point The disadvantage would be that due to long and difficult line of communication the size of the attacking force would be limited

The last—and the most important—alternative was to put in an attack along the main road combined with a subsidiary attack either north of the Jhelum or south of the river, with the object of cutting the line of communication between Rampur and Uri or Uri and MS 67 This subsidiary attack was more likely to come from south of the road than from north of the Jhelum There were obvious advantages in undertaking these offensive operations

(i) With a good line of communication, the enemy could employ a large force, supported by artillery and armour

(ii) There was a fairly good chance of getting into the Valley after a breakthrough at Urusa, which would have tremendous political and propaganda value.

The disadvantage would be that the attack along the main road would meet with strong resistance. General Thimayya's reading of the situation was that, on the whole, the last two courses offered maximum advantages to the enemy, and, therefore, he was most likely to adopt a combination of these two courses

In view of these possibilities, General Thimayya took into careful consideration the advantages and disadvantages of the two alternative courses open to him, namely (i) to withdraw the defence line to Uri and hold the enemy there to the last man and the last round, or (ii) to hold the enemy from existing positions The first course would have several advantages There would be a more compact defence The troops would be concentrated in a smaller area The line of communication would be shorter and easier and less exposed to enemy interference from the north—i e , the lower heights of Pandu Less troops would be required for defence, and it would be possible to have some troops in reserve

The disadvantages would, however, considerably outweigh the advantages It would be bad for the morale An Indian withdrawal

would have tremendous propaganda value for the enemy With his morale raised by the retreat of the Indian troops from the forward positions, the enemy would try and repeat his tactics and cut the line of communication at Heman Buniyar and attack Uri And finally the subsequent operations along the road Uri-Domel would be more difficult, as again the ground would have to be recaptured up to the existing forward positions near Urusa and Pir Kanthi

General Thimayya decided on a combination of both these courses i e , to hold the existing defence line with a secondary defence line at Uri His plan was to put two brigades forward to hold the enemy in the existing position in Uri-Urusa area with a view to going on the offensive subsequently The following localities were to be included in the defence area·

(a) **Locality 'A'**
Chinal Dori—Zambur Pattan—Pt 7760–Bausian—Pt. 4561 south-west along river Jhelum to Uri—Ziarat—Dauna—Chhota Kazinag and Chinal Dori

(b) **Locality 'B'**
Heman Buniyar—Kaurali forest—Jabri—Hathlanga forest—Bara—Milestone 68 and Heman Buniyar

(c) **Locality 'C'**
Milestone 58—Milestone 68—along Pir Panjal range to Pir Kanthi—Pt 9108 and Milestone 58

77 Para Brigade had on 11 July 1948 been given a new task—to take over the command of Gurais and Zoji La areas But with the loss of Pandu on 23 July the necessity was felt of strengthening the Uri sector. On 31 July 1948, Lieut-General Cariappa (General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Command) informed Major-General Thimayya that he could utilise the following additional units in his Division (specially earmarked for operations in area Burzil Pass and later for operations in area Dras and Kargil) to stabilise his position which had been disorganised on the Tithwal-Chakothi front·

(i) Gwalior Mountain Battery (to arrive shortly)
(ii) 5 Mahratta, 3 Jat and 1 Garhwal

General Cariappa however told Major-General Thimayya that the period of the use of these units would be as short as possible. He, therefore, asked Thimayya to write an appreciation on how soon he would be able to complete stabilization and release these units plus 2 Bihar, which had been sent specially to help him to reinforce the Sonamarg sector

On 5 August, Major-General Thimayya wrote an appreciation of the situation regarding the security of Chakothi-Uri and Tithwal areas He estimated that a total of 17 battalions would be required to stabilize his disorganised front·

(a) Chakothi-Uri area

(i) Chinal Dori-Chhota Kazinag	— 2 battalions
(ii) Urusa-Pt 9108	— 2 battalions
(iii) Pir Kanthi-Ledi Gali	— 2 battalions
(iv) Uri defences	— 1 battalion
(v) South of Uri to keep contact with enemy at Haji Pir	— 1 battalion
(vi) Mahura-Heman Buniyar	— 1 battalion
(vii) Reserve for above area	— 1 battalion
Total	—10 battalions

(b) Tithwal area

(i) Tithwal defences	— 1 battalion
(ii) Mir Kalsi-Pir Saheba	— 1 battalion
(iii) Richhmar Gali	— 1 battalion
(iv) Raniwala Dana ridge	— 1 battalion
(v) Seri ridge-Pt 10874	— 1 battalion
Total	— 5 battalions

(c) Handwara-Tithwal

(i) L of C (including defence of Tutmar Gali)	— 1 battalion
(ii) Divisional reserve based on Sopore	— 1 battalion
Grand Total	—17 battalions

In addition to 17 battalions required for the security of Chakothi-Uri and Tithwal areas, 4 battalions would be required for other sectors, Zoji La, and Gurais-Kanzalwan-Rajdiangan Pass But whereas the total requirements were 21 battalions, only 18 battalions were available (17 Indian Army battalions and 1 J & K State Force battalion) Therefore 3 additional infantry battalions were needed The date of the complete stabilization of the battle fronts would be dependent on the date of availability of these battalions Thimayya frankly informed Cariappa that it would be difficult to lay down any fixed date by which he would be able to thin out on Chakothi-Uri and Tithwal sectors, and thereby release adequate troops (i e 3 battalions) for the Kargil operations

The main reason why adequate reinforcements could not be sent to Jammu and Kashmir was that events were moving fast towards a crisis in Hyderabad, and it was feared that Police Action in Hyderabad would lead to communal disturbances in India and also possibly to the

outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan. On 6 July 1948 (i.e two days before the loss of the forward positions in Tithwal) Army Headquarters had issued instructions that no major operation would be undertaken without reference to them General Cariappa was instructed to concentrate mainly on stabilising the existing positions He was also informed that he should not expect any additional troops for some time to come Cariappa fully appreciated the anxieties of Army Headquarters over the overall situation in India, with particular reference to Hyderabad and the possible emergency arising along the Punjab frontier He, however, felt that "we must either be prepared to accept possible reversals on certain fronts in our J & K operations for want of adequate troops to drive out the enemy and retain troops in India to meet various contingencies in Hyderabad and our Western frontier, or we must do everything we can to avoid a National Emergency in India and make available more troops immediately to reinforce J & K forces to carry out offensive operations "

It was necessary to continue the offensive operations in order to prevent the enemy from seizing the initiative and launching powerful counter-attacks to recover lost ground General Cariappa felt it absolutely essential, militarily and politically, that Kargil should be retaken with little delay This required at least an additional brigade for Sri Div The capture of Mirpur, or at least the location of a Brigade Group on the high ground north of Mirpur, was necessary in order to prevent the enemy build-up for operations against Punch This operation required a Brigade Group It was also necessary to continue the offensive operations for the capture of Domel So on 13 July General Cariappa requested Army Headquarters for additional two Brigade Groups. Army Headquarters replied that three infantry battalions had already been made available to him for Kargil operations, but additional troops asked for were not available. The situation, however, underwent a sudden change with the loss of Pandu on 23 July, the Kargil operations had to be postponed, and General Thimayya was permitted to utilise the three infantry battalions earmarked for the Kargil operations for stabilising the Tithwal and Uri-Chakothi front.

Besides providing reinforcements, on 31 July 1948 Lt-Gen Cariappa issued the following detailed instructions to Maj-Gen Thimayya for raising the morale of the troops and avoiding major disasters·

"You will take every possible step to ensure that the positions you now hold in the Kashmir Valley are completely stabilized In doing this you must ensure that every rank under your command is fully aware of his responsibility to hold on to ground now in occupation until such time as you authorize withdrawal from such ground Not an inch of ground will be given to enemy nor will the enemy be allowed to go a yard past your forward positions into our territory.

"Every position will be prepared strongly with properly sited

section, platoon etc , posts mutually supporting, well dug in and bunkered and holding adequate reserves of ammunition, supplies and water You will make certain that each of such positions have sufficient inter-communication arranged All round defence will always be provided for

"You will impress on all commanders that when forced to withdraw, for tactical reasons, they will carry out such withdrawal in the normally accepted manner and not in an uncoordinated and unplanned way as happened recently, leaving behind quantities of equipment etc Every commander, no matter how small his command may be, will always have a position in rear, properly reconnoitered and known to all ranks in his command to which he, when forced to withdraw, will withdraw The normal procedure of withdrawal, i e the sending back first of impediments such as heavy and unwanted equipment, slow-moving personnel, then a party to go back to cover the withdrawal of the rest of the party, and then the withdrawal of the main party leaving behind a small party to come last

"Whilst you are to stabilize your present positions, I want you to make quite clear to all your sub commanders that they will always maintain intact front with the enemy to ensure that they are not surprised at any time This is best done by maintaining vigorous patrolling all round I want you to carry out certain long range patrolling under your orders into enemy country on a 'hit and run' basis Whenever possible, you will, without having to have a set piece offensive operation, endeavour to gain as much ground as possible forward of your present positions

"You will at all times make quite certain that your L of C is in no way endangered by your going forward

"I would like to see more deception carried out to harass and confuse the enemy of your intention "

With all these steps, the enemy counter-offensive in July 1948 was halted, and the front was stabilized Neither in the Tithwal nor in the Chakothi area was any further ground yielded to the enemy, even though he subjected the forward positions to heavy artillery and mortar fire Raids and counter-raids were frequent, but on the whole neither side gained any major advantage With the stabilization of the front in Uri and Tithwal, the interest of the story shifts to other theatres of war

Notes

1 According to Brig Henderson Brooks, the following additional troops were also under him when he took over 161 Bde
Sqn 7 Cav, 32 Assault Fd Coy Engineers, 2(Para) Madras, 6 Raj Rif, 3 Jat, 2 Sikh LI, and two (not one) bns of J&K Militia

2 The CO, Lt-Col M M Khanna, MVC, has disputed this version According to him, the enemy was attacked by a reinforcement platoon, and forced to retire, and his party brought back all arms and ammunition If the enemy had gained complete victory, all arms and equipments would have been lost

3 It is said that 2 Bihar withdrew from Pandu without justification and due to the CO's incompetence CO Lt-Col Tur, was courtmartialled after being put under arrest by Brig Henderson Brooks, the Bde Commander Gen Thimayya also blamed the CO of 2 Bihar for loss of Pandu

4 In his book *Izzat-o-Iqbal (History of Pakistan Artillery)*, p 71, Major-General Shaukat Riza has stated that the following Artillery units supported the Pakistani attack on Pandu

3 (Peshawar) Mountain Battery	2 guns
6 Field Battery	4 guns
22 Field Battery	4 guns
Medium Battery	2 guns
Anti-Aircraft	4 guns

CHAPTER XII

Operations of the Jammu Division

(April-July 1948)

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS

The story now reverts to the activities of 50 Para Brigade and 19 Brigade in Jhangar-Naushahra area At the time of the recapture of Jhangar on 18 March 1948, three brigades were concentrated in Jhangar-Naushahra area 50 Para Brigade and 19 Brigade in Jhangar, and King Brigade at Naushahra 19 Brigade comprised 1 Rajput, 1 Kumaon Rifles, 4 Dogra and ancillary units, 50 Para Brigade comprised 1 Patiala, 3 (Para) Mahratta LI, 3 (Para) Rajput and ancillary units, and King Brigade comprised 2/2 Punjab, 2 Rajputana Rifles, 2 Jat and ancillary units After the capture of Jhangar the two forward brigades spent their time in consolidating their position, and strengthening the Jhangar defences Towards the end of March some reorganisation of the forces in Naushahra-Jhangar area took place, 1 Kumaon Rifles returned to Naushahra while 1 Patiala left for Jammu On 19 March 1948, 19 Brigade took over the Naushahra garrison, which comprised four infantry battalions with their ancillary units The role of 1 Kumaon Rifles was to open the road Naushahra-Beri Pattan The role of 2/2 Punjab was to open the road Naushahra-Jhangar For this purpose 2/2 Punjab manned the picquets which dominated the road A company was at Nothi Dhar, B company at Pt 3574, C company at Yadav and D company at Pir Thil. 2 Jat was at Tain Dhar and Ambli Dhar 2 Rajputana Rifles manned the picquets at Kot and Mangaldei The garrison was still further strengthened by the arrival on 5 April of 5 Jat, one squadron tanks Central India Horse, two platoons 1563 Pioneer Company and two companies 1 Bihar On 7 April 4 Dogra returned to Naushahra to take part in the operations for the capture of Rajauri Next day 1 Sikh Light Infantry arrived at Naushahra as a reserve for 19 Brigade and 50 Para Brigade

The Jhangar garrison under the command of 50 Bde comprised four battalions and their ancillary units 1 Rajput manned the forward positions A company was at Gaikot—No. 4 picquet, B company was at the ring contour—No. 3 picquet, C company was at Pt 3327—No 5 picquet, D company was at Pt 3638—No 1 picquet; Tactical Headquarters with the remaining company and administrative details were in camp in Jhangar 4 Dogra was in area Jhangar-Dharamsal till 7 April when it was recalled to Naushahra. 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry and 3 (Para) Rajput manned the Jhangar perimeter On the morning of 28 March 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry moved from Matlasi and occupied Pir Satwan before 0900 hours The enemy was

taken by surprise and fled in disorder. But he immediately started to build up in area Bhed and what came to be known as M G. Hill. The capture of the Pir Satwan feature was of great importance since it prevented any further encroachment of the enemy from Mirpur-Kotli road or along Tharochi valley The Mahrattas established two picquets, one at about 360 metres and the second at 720 metres south of Pir Satwan ridge Chagrined by the loss of Pir Satwan, enemy, about 400 strong, attacked the feature at 1830 hours on 31 March This was mainly directed on C company position facing M G Hill A few enemy broke into the company's position in the first fanatic rush only to die by bayonet and grenade The attack faded away by 2100 hours

After the loss of Jhangar on 18 March the enemy was busy in reorganising his forces, with the intention of recapturing this vital position and also of launching an attack on Naushahra There was increased enemy activity in the Bhed area, about 6 km west of Jhangar, near the road Mirpur-Jhangar His strength in the area was estimated to be about one battalion with seven 3-inch mortars and four automatics. He was reported to be strongly holding the area covering one and a half km south-east to one and a half km north-east of Bhed Tandar, 4 km south-west of Bhed, was another enemy concentration area A patrol from 3 (Para) Mahratta LI met with heavy mortaring and medium machine gun fire from Bhed area on 4 April

The enemy was also holding Khambah fort, 2 km south-east of Bhed One of the Indian patrols encountered one company of enemy 720 metres east of Khambah fort On another occasion one of the picquets near Pt 3574 was ineffectively engaged by enemy machine gun fire from Khambah fort. Another centre of enemy activity was Baroh, about 10 km south-east of Jhangar The enemy strength at Baroh was estimated to be approximately four hundred Yet another trouble spot was the Seri area, 8 km north of Jhangar One of the armoured columns to Seri reached the area, 3 km south of Seri and observed about one battalion of the hostiles in area Giran. On seeing the column they fired twenty 3-inch mortar bombs and 100 rounds of 303, using four automatics Enemy strength in Giran area was estimated to be about two companies.

DIRECTIVE AND PLAN

While 50 Para Bde was busy consolidating its position in Jhangar, Lt-Gen K M Cariappa, GOC-in-C, Western Command, was engaged in preparing a directive for the guidance of Major-General Kalwant Singh, GOC JAK Force This directive was issued on 22 March 1948 The particular tasks of JAK Force were defined as follows

(a) To consolidate Jhangar and provide for the security of L of C Naushahra-Jhangar

(b) To ensure the complete security of Srinagar and Jammu.

(c) To continue to hold, with the minimum number, the essential

outposts, such as (i) Akhnur and its outposts at Chhamb and Beri Pattan, (ii) Naushahra, (iii) Uri, (iv) Baramula, (v) Handwara, (vi) Skardu-Leh-Kargil, with a firm base established at Kargil, (vii) localities then occupied on L of C Kathua-Jammu, Jammu-Naushahra, Jammu-Srinagar

(d) To continue to protect the Jammu-Pakistan frontier against raids

(e) To plan for the evacuation of the refugees and the garrison of Punch

(f) To patrol in the direction of Rajauri and establish there a force of one battalion with the essential administrative services, but to forego this if it necessitated offensive operation to secure the objective

The general tasks of JAK Force were defined as follows.

(a) To be prepared to capture Domel

(b) To encourage the re-occupation of evacuated villages, and to give every assistance to the State government in this matter

(c) To plan for the withdrawal of the garrison of Jhangar, when ordered to do so by Headquarters Western Command

77 Para Brigade on L of C Pathankot-Samba was to come under command JAK Force on midnight 25/26 March No other forces, other than the following would be made available to Major-General Kalwant Singh for the above mentioned tasks

(a) Headquarters 163 Brigade for Srinagar

(b) A L of C Area Headquarters as soon as it was raised

(c) One 10-ton GT company of three platoons

(d) Certain minor ancillary units then raising

On 6 April Lt-General Cariappa issued further instructions to Major-General Kalwant Singh The latter's main tasks in order of priority, in addition to those already stated in the directive dated 22 March 1984, were

(i) If possible to despatch by air one battalion to reinforce the garrison of Punch; also to reinforce Skardu garrison so as to bring it to one complete battalion by 20 April 1948

(ii) To carry out operation 'Ranjit' for the capture of Rajauri

(iii) To secure L of C Naushahra-Rajauri

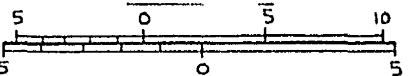
(iv) To build up to one additional brigade in the Kashmir Valley.

(v) To plan for the evacuation of refugees from Punch

(vi) To plan for the occuption of Domel, if possible by 15 May

(vii) To establish firm bases at Leh, Kargil, and Gurais

JAK Force was now poised for the spring offensive The operation for the capture of Rajauri was given code name of 'Ranjit' (earlier called 'Mumtaz') The 48 km stretch of country which the Indian troops had to traverse to capture Rajauri was thickly wooded and well defended with enemy machine guns and mortars One enemy battalion with 3-inch mortars and light machine guns was holding the high ground


CAPTURE OF RAJAURI
APRIL 1948
KILOMETRES
5 0 5 10
5 0 5
MILES
DISPOSITIONS OF INDIAN TROOPS
ADVANCE " " "
N
5800 RAMGARH
TO MENDHAR
3132
BAN N
TO KOTLI
RAJAURI
4848
THIKRIAN DHARA
KHORBAN R
SERI
BAGLAGALA
4408
5432
PARAN
4810
R
DHERIAN
A
M
P
U
R
4222
GESARGALA
NAUSHAHRA TAWI R
SOHR GALA
TO MIRPUR
CHINGAS
ANDRUT
3831
NARIAN
BOHANI
3327
GIRAN
MERA
3754
KOT
PATHRADI
JAMBWRA
NAUSHAHRA
WIRELESS STATION
DHERIAN
DANDESAR
BHAJNDA
DHARMSALA
BABBIAN GALA
BABORI GALA
NIARI TAWI
4285
3549
SAMANI
THANDAPANIWALI TAWI
BERI PATTAN
TO AKHNUR
3982
KALI DHAR
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B
H
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MUNAWWAR WALI T

on either side of the road Naushahra-Chingas. Enemy positions along the high ground west of the road were comparatively stronger than on the east East of the road the main enemy position was in the Mal area West of the road, Barwali ridge was held by the hostiles in strength In this area the enemy positions were known to exist at Sardot, Daruni, Barwali ridge and the ring contour Further to the west the enemy was holding Pt. 3831 and Pt 4622 A large proportion of the local population, under enemy propaganda, had also turned hostile, and was giving active assistance to the enemy The enemy on this front consisted mainly of deserter units of the State Force, ex-soldiers and locals Approximately 5,000 Indian nationals were believed to be held by the enemy under the most oppressive conditions

The road Naushahra-Rajauri was a fair weather motorable road Between Rajauri and Chingas it was reported to be in use by the enemy The sector from Nadpur to Chingas had not been used since long and had been damaged by rain and land-slides In addition, the enemy had blocked this sector in four places by felling trees across the road, and was also suspected to have laid mines

Major-General Kalwant Singh detailed 19 Brigade for the task of capturing and holding Rajauri The following additional troops were under command 19 Brigade [1]

Central India Horse less two squadrons
5 Jat
Two platoons 1563 Pioneer Company

Before the advance began on 8 April, in Naushahra area, 2 Rajputana Rifles was holding Kot and 5 Jat was holding Tain Dhar and Pt 3754 to Pt 2916 The plan was for 19 Brigade to capture and hold Rajauri in two stages (i) capture of Chingas (ii) capture of Rajauri 2 Rajputana Rifles less two companies was to capture Mal ring contour and establish a picquet on the right flank In the centre 4 Dogra was to advance from Nadpur south and attack Barwali ridge, and then advance to Santogala Forest On the left flank, 2 Jat was to advance from Tanda area and secure Pt. 3931 and Pt 4622 1 Kumaon Rifles was then to pass through and attack Chingas

To assist 19 Brigade's attack on Chingas and Rajauri, 50 Para Brigade was to carry out a diversionary operation in area Khinratta on Jhangar-Kotli road on D plus one day 80 Brigade was to carry out a diversionary operation in area Dharamsal in Beri Pattan sector on D minus one day Banmanus (Guerillas) were to operate in area Nali Dabi and Andrut on D day to kill enemy escaping to the west

ADVANCE TO CHINGAS AND RAJAURI

The commander of 19 Brigade ordered 4 Dogra to capture Barwali ridge, held by the enemy in strength Central India Horse less two squadrons was to be in support of 4 Dogra Two squadrons Central India Horse were to clear road Naushahra-Chingas and occupy Chingas.

4 Dogra left Naushahra on 8 April in order to attack Barwali ridge. The attack supported by tanks and artillery started at 1230 hours. B company advanced from the right and D company on the left. Enemy offered strong resistance, and used automatics and medium machine guns His 3-inch mortars shelled the forming up place and the start line Still the objective was captured at 1530 hours. Enemy suffered heavy casualties, and his counter-attack was also repulsed. Indian casualties were 7 killed and 20 wounded The enemy withdrew towards the Rani Forest

It was during this action that Captain J N Jatar of the Central India Horse displayed outstanding gallantry and superb courage and was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra When the attack on Barwali ridge began, Captain Jatar volunteered to go with the leading company of Dogras When the forward troops were held up by heavy enemy fire, he moved across the bullet-and-mortar swept Tawi river bed on the left flank His wireless set had been hit by an enemy bullet, but, standing in full view of the enemy, he had the presence of mind to give the required signals by means of a handkerchief tied on to his wireless post It was solely due to his signalling that close tank-support was given to the Dogras for continuous five hours, which made it possible for them to take the objective

When 4 Dogra was held up by strong opposition at Barwali ridge, the brigade commander ordered 1 Kumaon Rifles to reinforce the Dogras At 1715 hours news was, however, received of the success of the Dogras and, therefore, the battalion returned to Camp

On 9 April 4 Dogra extended their position on the ridge and captured Rani Forest and Chor Ban

While 4 Dogra attacked and captured Barwali ridge, 2 Jat made a thrust on the left flank After being relieved by 5 Jat in area Tain Dhar, 2 Jat concentrated on 8 April in area between Pt 3319 and Pt 2916 for the attack on Pt 3831 and Pt 4622 The commander ordered the battalion to capture Pt 3831 by 0600 hours on D day and Pt 4622 by 1200 hours on D day and to establish picquets

B company 2 Jat started off on its approach march at 0001 hours on 9 April and contacted the enemy at 0600 hours on Pt 3831 The feature was captured after seven hours' stiff struggle, which was waged over a very treacherous piece of ground The company suffered 27 casualties The enemy casualties were still heavier Pt 3831 was captured at 1415 hours and a picquet (Rohtak picquet) was established The Jats then continued the advance towards Pt 4622—a distance of about 5 km, and again a very undulating piece of country Forward elements reached village Chakli at 1800 hours, and as it was getting late the battalion less one company stayed there for the night under the orders of the Brigade with a view to attacking Pt. 4622 next morning.

Meanwhile 1 Kumaon Rifles, in reserve, had moved up from Tanda area to exploit the success gained by the Jats The plan of operations

made by the commander of 1 Kumaon Rifles was that after the capture of Mal by 2 Rajputana Rifles, and Pt. 3831 and Pt 4622 by 2 Jat, the battalion was to capture the high ground nearby

After the capture of Chingas the commander of 1 Kumaon Rifles would issue order for the advance on Rajauri A company would be prepared to make a quick move north of Chingas if it was decided to make a bid for Rajauri with tanks

Advance to Rajauri was to be in bounds with A company on the right and B company on the left On arrival at Rajauri A company was to occupy and hold Pt 4190, B company Fort Danidhar and C company Pt 4454.

The following troops were under command and in support of 1 Kumaon Rifles:

One platoon medium machine gun (after the capture of Pt 4622 by 2 Jat)
5 Mountain Battery
One troop 30 Field Battery (in direct support)
Rest of artillery (on call)
Contact Car Air (on call)

The battalion left Camp at 0400 hours on 9 April and arrived at the firm base Pt. 2916 at 0700 hours D company was left behind for the protection of the Brigade Headquarters At 0845 hours A and B companies attacked and captured high feature near Kamiz in face of heavy opposition Later, at 1115 hours the rest of the battalion also joined the forward companies A and B companies then attacked and captured the hill near Chakli in face of heavy opposition The battalion spent the night on this feature in preparation for the attack on Pt 4622 in conjunction with 2 Jat in the morning on 10 April

The operations had been carried out successfully on the left of the road Naushahra-Chingas also 4 Dogra had overcome strong enemy resistance at Barwali ridge and had pushed on to Rani Forest and Chor Ban, 2 Jat had secured Pt 3831, and then along with 1 Kumaon Rifles had pushed on to Chakli area On the right of the road Naushahra-Chingas, equally satisfactory progress was made. 2 Rajputana Rifles less two companies at Kot was given the task of capturing Mal ring contour, and establishing a picquet there The Kot picquet was strengthened by the arrival of B and D companies 5 Jat on 7 April Indian troops maintaining the advance well on steep climbs and through thick growth of thorny bushes, in the darkness of the night, successfully surprised the enemy and captured Mal at 0630 hours on 9 April and established a picquet there

By the evening of 9 April all the three columns had made good progress On the right 2 Rajputana Rifles had secured Mal contour, in the centre 4 Dogra had captured Barwali ridge and were established in Rani Forest and Chor Ban, on the left Pt 3831 had been captured and

A 3 7-inch Howitzer in action

Jawans climbing snow-covered hill during the assault on Zoji La



A happy Gorkha jawan at the Zoji La



Hav-Maj Piru Singh, PVC (Posthumous)



Lance Naik Karam Singh, PVC, MM



Naik Jadunath Singh, PVC (Posthumous)



2/Lt R R Rane, PVC



Lt-Col Dewan Ranjit Rai, MVC (Posthumous)



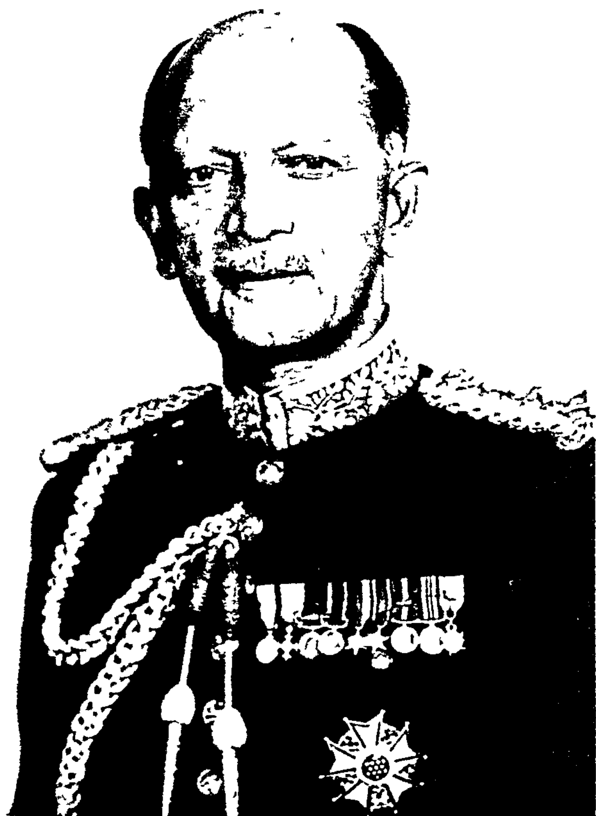
Naik Nand Singh, VC, MVC (Posthumous)



Brig M Usman, MVC (Posthumous)



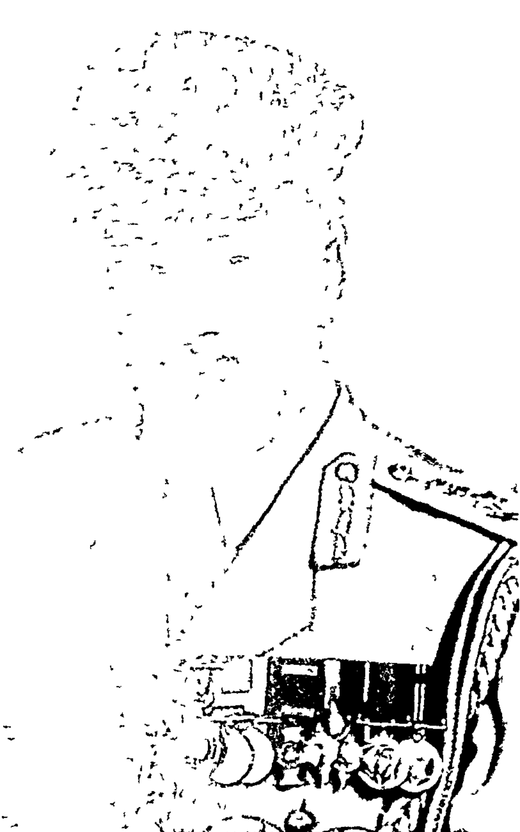
Air Commodore Mehar Singh, DSO, MVC



Gen (Later Fıeld Marshal) K M Carıappa, OBE



Gen S M Shrınagesh



Gen K S Thımayya, DSO



Lt-Gen Kalwant Sıngh

C company 4 Dogra under command left Chingas for Rajauri and reached there at 0930 hours 4 Dogra less C company attacked and captured Pt. 3639 to clear some pockets of enemy resistance A company established a permanent picquet there while the rest of the battalion reached Rajauri at night.

Total enemy losses were estimated at 500 killed and an equal number wounded The enemy blew up his ammunition dump though the Indian troops captured clothing and ration stores Three big pits around Rajauri were full of dead bodies as a result of atrocities committed by the hostiles

DIVERSIONARY OPERATIONS

50 Para Brigade and 80 Brigade carried out diversionary operations in areas Jhangar and Beri Pattan respectively to distract the attention of the enemy from the main operation 'Ranjit' for the capture of Rajauri 50 Para Brigade carried out the diversionary operation 'Hathi' on 9 April to capture a feature, about 5 km north of Jhangar. Enemy was becoming aggressive in this area i.e. between the river Ban and the ridge on the west of the road Jhangar-Kotli On night 8/9 April about thirty hostiles attacked 1 Rajput picquet No 1 at Pt 3638. The attack was repulsed inflicting many casualties It was to deal with this menace and to create a diversion for the main operation that Brigadier Usman decided to send a column for operations in Seri valley and the flanking high features The column consisted of one platoon B company 1 Rajput; two platoons D company 1 Rajput, one platoon Commando, one platoon 3 (Para) Mahratta LI and company less one platoon 2 Bihar In support were two troops of tanks and 7 (Bengal) Mountain Battery

About 2 km north-west of Pandhar the enemy held a feature with about one company, one 3-inch mortar and one medium machine gun The column captured the feature at 1000 hours on 9 April after a stiff fight An enemy counter-attack was dispersed by artillery fire During the withdrawal of the column, however, the enemy became aggressive and attacked picquet No 1 at Pt 3638 The attack was successfully repulsed, though the defenders suffered nine casualties

80 Brigade too carried out a diversionary operation in area Beri Pattan Enemy was holding Pt 2502, about 6 km north of Beri Pattan, with approximately one battalion Tactical Headquarters 1/2 Punjab and two companies, each with under command one mortar detachment, left Beri Pattan at 1800 hours on 7 April. Forward Observation Officer 46 Field Battery accompanied the column. After a long and tiring march, D company captured Pt 2608 without opposition at 0815 hours on 8 April C company advancing along the ridge on to their first objective attacked the ring contour with two platoons but met heavy opposition from one medium machine gun and at least four light machine guns, which were in well dug in position on the top of the ring

contour This attack was not successful C company was ordered to reform and it was decided to put in an attack after softening the enemy position with artillery In all about fifty 25-pounder shells and thirty mortar bombs were fired An attack was made on the ring contour at 1300 hours but again it proved unsuccessful At about 1400 hours, enemy tried to rush one of D company sections but was beaten back

As the troops had been in action continuously for about twenty hours, it was decided to harbour for the night 8/9 April at Pt 2608 and carry on night patrolling The enemy continued sniping throughout the night At about 1430 hours on 9 April orders were received to return to the base Withdrawal to the base started at 1500 hours, and the troops arrived at the base at about 1900 hours Total Indian casualties were 3 killed and 6 wounded It was estimated that the enemy casualties were 19 killed and 35 wounded

On 11 April when 19 Brigade advanced from area Chingas for the capture of Rajauri, 80 Brigade carried out a diversionary operation in area Beri Pattan A column of 1/2 Punjab was sent out at 0430 hours on 11 April towards Kariman The column reached Kariman at 2100 hours, and bumped into enemy's position and suffered four casualties The enemy, however, ran away when counter-attacked and left behind 26 army blankets, 200 rounds of 303 ammunition and his cooked food The column arrived at Beri Pattan at 2000 hours on 12 April

ENEMY ATTACK ON JHANGAR AND NAUSHAHRA

Enemy reaction to the loss of Rajauri was to launch co-ordinated attacks on Jhangar and Naushahra At 0450 hours on 16 April the hostiles, approximately 1000 strong, launched a three pronged attack on the Indian positions at Jhangar from north, south and north-west The attack was well co-ordinated and made under cover of darkness and mortar fire The enemy put in an attack on Pir Satwan (held by 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry) with heavy 3-inch mortar fire for fifteen minutes from 0500 hours. The attack developed soon after the end of mortar fire from the side of D company facing Bhed, and C and A companies facing M G Hill The men held fire with perfect discipline and opened up as soon as the raiders debouched from the pine woods into the open area in front of their wired perimeter The casualties inflicted were heavy The depleted strength of the battalion and the wide and vital ground held did not permit pursuit which would have brought in many prisoners Nine enemy bodies were counted around the perimeter of C and D companies and seventy more casualties were believed to have been inflicted Enemy continued to snipe the picquets till 1515 hours from area Khambah fort There were also minor attacks on picquets in area Jhangar All these attacks were repulsed

After his unsuccessful attack on 16 April on Jhangar, enemy began to build up his forces in the area south-west of Bhed, and in areas west and north of Jhangar near Pir Satwan, Sabzkot and Tain respectively On

18 April, 1 Rajput picquet No 1 at Pt 3638 was attacked by 200 to 300 men using 3-inch mortar and medium machine guns The attack was repulsed On 19 April 1 Rajput picquet No. 3 was mortared The mortar was silenced by Indian artillery After sniping and firing at the picquet at Pt 3574, about 2000 metres north-east of the Khambah fort, for two days, the enemy attempted to approach, but was effectively engaged and dispersed On the night of 21 April this picquet was again subjected to heavy fire, which was silenced by Indian artillery Fifty raiders, who were observed carrying ammunition boxes in the area 5 km south of Bhed, and another party of ten men, seen unloading a truck about 360 metres west south-west of Bhed on road Mirpur-Jhangar, were also effectively engaged and dispersed by artillery

Enemy received reinforcements for his positions in area Sabzkot and Pir Satwan during night 29/30 April, and consequently increased his efforts to probe into the Indian defences In the area Pir Satwan 2250 metres north-east of Bhed, the picquet 360 metres to the south was sniped at, and bombed by 3-inch mortar An enemy platoon attempted to approach the picquet but was intercepted and engaged Another party of about 28 enemy, seen moving in area Pailan, about 2 km north-west of Pir Satwan, was engaged and dispersed by mortars Such skirmishes were frequent

Enemy attack on Jhangar on 16 April was co-ordinated with attacks on the Indian positions in the Naushahra sector A determined attempt was made to oust the Indian picquets from the Kaman Gosha Gala feature, which dominated the roads and tracks leading out towards Jhangar and Beri Pattan, and especially the one in the area of milestones 3–4, where on 22–23 December 1947, the enemy had attempted to ambush the reinforcement column to Jhangar The brunt of the attack was borne by 2/2 Punjab manning picquets at Pt. 3574 near Kaman Gosha Gala, Yadav, Nothi Dhar and Pir Thil Nakka. Enemy attack was chiefly directed against Yadav and Pir Thil Nakka picquets The estimated enemy strength was about 1500 men for the attack on Kaman Gosha Gala and about 300 men for the attack on Pir Thil Nakka At 0300 hours on 16 April the attackers cut off the L of C with Pir Thil Nakka picquet, and then fired about a hundred 3-inch mortar bombs on this picquet At 0500 hours, about 300 enemy attacked the picquet from south, south-west and south-east Such was the fury of the onslaught that they reached within 450 metres and opened automatic fire on the picquet, which continued to be heavily shelled. At 1050 hours Yadav picquet was surrounded by enemy on all sides By 1900 hours the Yadav picquet was hard pressed. On an urgent call for help, two companies 1 Sikh Light Infantry and a platoon of 2/2 Punjab were sent from Naushahra and reached picquet at Pt 3574 at 0600 hours on 17 April At 0800 hours they launched an attack on the enemy position near Yadav picquet, and captured it after a fierce struggle. At 1220 hours, however, about four companies of the hostiles made a determined

counter-attack and drove the Indian relief column back to Pt 3574

1 Sikh Light Infantry was now ordered to drive out the enemy from the main feature The enemy was about a battalion strong and had six medium machine guns He had mined the area with anti-personnel mines, especially the approaches to his own positions 1 Sikh Light Infantry (less two companies at picquet Pt 3574) left Naushahra and joined the two companies at picquet Pt 3574 at 0700 hours on 18 April At the same time, RIAF aircraft softened the area held by the enemy and at 0800 hours 1 Sikh Light Infantry supported by two tanks launched a determined attack The enemy opened up with medium machine gun fire from well dug-in positions and bunkers and succeeded in delaying the advance, but the enemy position was captured at 1215 hours against strong opposition A counter-attack was repulsed by effective artillery and aircraft support Enemy withdrawing south-west along the ridge towards village Kheri was strafed and harassed from the air The total enemy casualties in this engagement were 160 killed and 200 wounded Later, at 1415 hours the same day, an enemy company was seen digging in about 180 metres north-west of Katora Khori A platoon was sent out from Yadav picquet, the enemy was dispersed and the area occupied at 1515 hours

Meanwhile Pir Thil Nakka picquet continued to repulse enemy attacks It was high time to relieve it At 0830 hours on 19 April a column from Yadav picquet consisting of B, C and D companies with Tactical Headquarters 2/2 Punjab, and one company 1 Sikh Light Infantry under command, left for the relief of the Pir Thil Nakka picquet. The column reached Nothi Dhar at 1030 hours and nearby area at 1115 hours As the column neared the picquet, a patrol from the picquet sallied out and attacked the enemy positions at 1230 hours The hostiles, however, managed to escape before the pincer movement could be successfully carried out After this setback, enemy confined his activities to sniping and mortaring

RAIDS AND COUNTER-RAIDS IN RAJAURI AREA

After the capture of Rajauri, 1 Kumaon Rifles and 4 Dogra consolidated their positions 1 Kumaon Rifles manned the following picquets

A company	—Fort area
B company	—Fort area
C company	—Pt 4454 (code word Noor picquet)
D company	—Pt. 4190 (code word Ranjit picquet)

As for 4 Dogra, A company manned the picquet at Pt 3693 (code named Kanga picquet) while the rest of the battalion concentrated in Fort area The task of the Dogras and 1 Kumaon Rifles was to probe into enemy defences around Rajauri On 14 April a patrol from B company 1 Kumaon Rifles went to village Sain Samut but was held up at 1250 hours by enemy fire A company, sent out to reinforce the patrol,

captured Pt 3798 against stiff opposition At 1430 hours enemy heavily mortared Pt 3798 and consequently the Indian troops returned to the Fort

On 16 April enemy, approximately one company, attacked the Fort He was engaged by small arms and mortar fire and compelled to retire Next day the Dogras raided enemy dumps at Gurdanbala and brought back one 2-inch mortar, one sten gun and 18 mules

On 18 April some reorganisation of the defence of Rajauri took place B and D companies 4 Dogra relieved C and D companies 1 Kumaon Rifles at picquets Noor and Ranjit respectively The following day A and D companies 1 Kumaon Rifles attacked Pt 4180 and captured it after slight opposition Then C company 4 Dogra established a permanent picquet at Pt 4180 (code named Mumtaz picquet)

On 22 April C and D companies 1 Kumaon Rifles with additional troops—2 detachment mortars, section medium machine guns, Forward Observation Officer, Sapper mine detecting party, and detachment field ambulance, were sent to secure and search the area Gurdanbala and bring back all arms, amunition, medical stores and enemy documents found in this area

C and D companies 1 Kumaon Rifles attacked and captured Pt 4301 and B company established a picquet on Pt 4301 (code named Usha picquet). C company then established itself on heights around village Gurdanbala and D company searched the village One platoon of enemy was seen running away towards the north But only one rusty sten gun was recovered from the village

OPERATION 'BIRBAL'

While 4 Dogra and 1 Kumaon Rifles were probing into enemy positions around Rajauri, Commander 19 Brigade was busy planning for the capture of Thana Mandi The operation was given the code name 'Birbal' On 24 April 1948, B and D companies with Tactical Headquarters of 2/2 Punjab had moved from Naushahra to Rajauri to act as a reserve for 19 Brigade On 29 April A company also moved from Naushahra to reinforce B and D companies 1 Kumaon Rifles, with B company 2/2 Punjab under command, was assigned the task of capturing Thana Mandi The plan was for 1 Kumaon Rifles to seize the feature east of Sain Samut, and Pt 5603 and then advance to attack and capture Thana Mandi The task of B company of 2/2 Punjab was to protect the tanks and guns and guard the left flank of the main column

1 Kumaon Rifles left Camp at 0500 hours on 1 May 1948 A and B companies attacked the feature east of Sain Samut which was held by the enemy in strength After a fierce struggle lasting for two and a half hours the objective was captured at a cost of 4 killed and 19 wounded Then Pt 5603 was captured after slight resistance A firm base was established at milestone 8, where the battalion stayed for the night Meanwhile B company 2/2 Punjab carried out its task of left flank

protection, reached the village Sain Samut at 1000 hours on 1 May, and then pushed on to Uderi, where a temporary picquet was established at 1230 hours. Moving on to Mahrajpur which had already been secured by 1 Kumaon Rifles, the company established by 2000 hours a temporary picquet for the night at Pathian.

At 0600 hours on 2 May 1 Kumaon Rifles moved forward from its firm base at milestone 8 for the attack on Thana Mandi. On the right A company captured the high feature and on the left a platoon of D company occupied another hill. Advancing in the centre, two platoons of D company, supported by tanks of Central India Horse, captured Thana Mandi at 1230 hours. No enemy was encountered. D company 2/2 Punjab then moved on to Thana Mandi, where they arrived by evening. Having carried out its task of clearing enemy pockets of resistance and capturing Thana Mandi, 1 Kumaon Rifles left Thana Mandi for Rajauri at 0700 hours on 3 May. D company dropped on the way and established a permanent picquet in Nirojal area code named Birbal picquet.

OPERATION 'HAT'

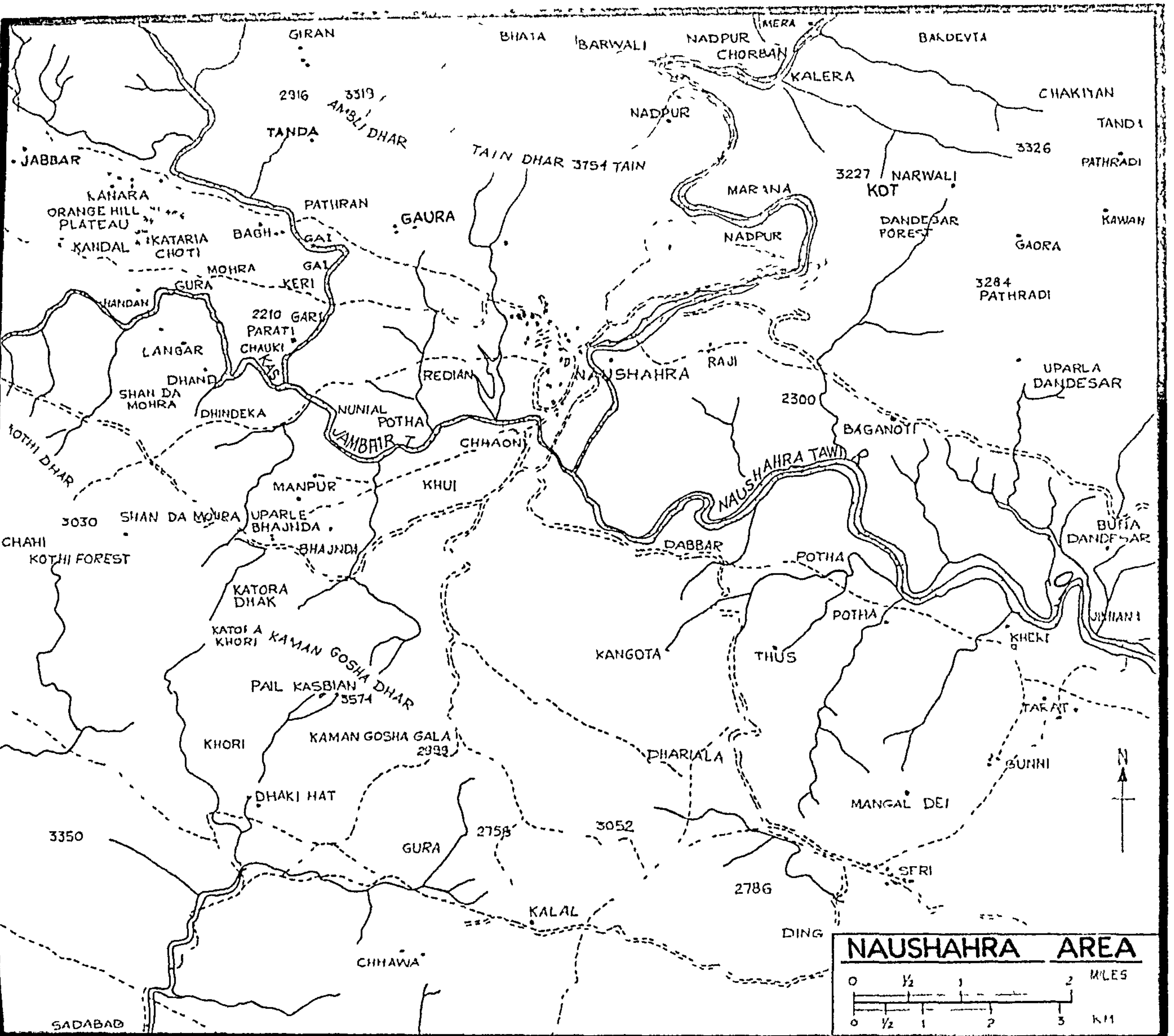
Early in May 1948 Major-General Atma Singh, who had taken over Jammu Division, turned his attention to the two-fold task of consolidating his position in Jhangar and removing enemy threat to the line of communication—Jammu-Naushahra.

After the capture of Rajauri and completion of mopping up operations, Tactical Headquarters 19 Brigade returned to Naushahra on 5 May. As the line of communication in area Seri was being continuously shelled and mortared from Pt. 3571, Major-General Atma Singh decided to carry out an operation to destroy the enemy in the area. It was estimated that two enemy companies were holding strong positions from Pt. 3571 to Arsal *Nala*. To carry out this operation, a combined force made up of units under command 19 Brigade and 80 Brigade was set up. The force was known as Yadu-Jayal Force after the names of the two Brigade Commanders, and was to consist of

19 Brigade
2 Rajputana Rifles
4 Dogra

80 Brigade
1/2 Punjab
1 Patiala

Supporting arms
Troop of tanks of Central India Horse
45 Field Battery less one troop
Troop 46 Field Battery
37 Field Company less two platoons
Section medium machine guns


NAUSHAHRA AREA
MILES
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½
1
2
KM
0
½
1
2
3
N
GIRAN
BHATA
BARWALI
NADPUR
CHORBAN
MERA
BARDEVTA
KALERA
CHAKIYAN
TANDI
3326
PATHRADI
2916
3319
AMBLI DHAR
TANDA
NADPUR
TAIN DHAR 3754 TAIN
JABBAR
KANARA
ORANGE HILL
PLATEAU
KANDAL
KATARIA
CHOTI
PATHRAN
GAURA
BAGH
GAI
MARANA
3227
KOT
NARWALI
DANDESAR
FOREST
KAWAN
GAORA
NADPUR
MOHRA
GAI
KERI
GURA
HANDAN
2210
GARI
PARATI
CHAUKI
3284
PATHRADI
LANGAR
DHAND
SHAN DA
MOHRA
REDIAN
NAUSHAHRA
RAJI
UPARLA
DANDESAR
2300
DHINDEKA
NUNIAL
POTHA
BAGANOTI
KOTHI DHAR
JAMBHIR T.
CHHAONI
NAUSHAHRA TAWI
MANPUR
KHUI
3030
SHAN DA MOHRA
UPARLE
BHAJNDA
BUTTA
DANDESAR
CHAHI
KOTHI FOREST
BHAJNDA
DABBAR
POTHA
KATORA
DHAK
POTHA
KATORA
KHORI
KAMAN GOSHA DHAR
KANGOTA
THUS
KHERI
PAIL KASBIAN
3574
KHORI
KAMAN GOSHA GALA
2999
DHARIALA
BUNNI
MANGAL DEI
DHAKI HAT
3350
GURA
2758
3052
2786
SERI
KALAL
DING
CHHAWA
SADABAD

At 1400 hours on 5 May 1948, 2 Rajputana Rifles left Naushahra and concentrated at Pt 3052 at about 1700 hours The battalion objective was to capture two pimples to the north-west of Pt 3571, dominating Kalal valley The battalion marched off at 0300 hours on 6 May with one medium machine gun When the leading companies reached their second bound, enemy opened up with automatics and rifle fire Enemy used his 3-inch mortar and also machine guns from the opposite ridge, Chhawa Dhar The medium machine gun fire and mortar shells checked the advance of 2 Rajputana Rifles In view of the stiff opposition, the Brigadier ordered the battalion to retreat, and at 1400 hours on 6 May 2 Rajputana Rifles got back to their concentration area, Pt 3052

It was then decided to launch a two-battalion attack—1/2 Punjab to capture Pt. 3571 and 1 Patiala to clear enemy from area Grund Gala D company 1/2 Punjab led the attack on Pt 3571 The night was dark and the climb stiff and tiring While the rest of the battalion and 1 Patiala moved forward to the ring contour, D company put in a dawn attack and captured Pt 3571 by 0630 hours Enemy casualties were 24 killed, with 10 prisoners Two 3-inch mortars with 80 bombs, one Browning gun and ammunition were also captured This success was encouraging and now 1 Patiala tried to exploit towards Grund Gala—the enemy stronghold At 1000 hours on 7 May 1 Patiala attacked Grund Gala and cleared the area about 900 metres to the south and 360 metres to the west After having chastised the enemy, 1 Patiala as well as 1/2 Punjab returned to Camp by 1800 hours on 7 May

The next offensive operation was undertaken by 19 Brigade to mop up the area of the ridge Pandhar-Dhariot in cooperation with 50 Para Brigade in Jhangar area who were to clear Pt 3005-Pogla and thus to thwart enemy intentions of blocking the road Naushahra-Jhangar in that area It was a serious threat, for an enemy battalion was occupying ridge Pandhar-Dhariot and the hostiles were also holding area ring contour and Pogla

2 Rajputana Rifles from Naushahra reached concentration area at about 0700 hours on 12 May The battalion was informed that the features adjacent to its objective were manned by friendly troops and, therefore, right flank protection was not necessary during the approach march This information turned out to be false, with the result that the battalion fell into a trap laid for it by the enemy. At about 1030 hours on 12 May when 2 Rajputana Rifles reached 900 metres short of its objective, enemy opened up with mortar, medium machine gun, light machine gun and rifle fire from all sides Having observed the advance of the battalion from their forward posts and picquets, enemy had cleverly allowed 2 Rajputana Rifles to get into the *Nala* , overlooked and dominated by the two features held by the enemy For a moment, it was feared that the battalion had been caught in a death trap Enemy machine guns and 3-inch mortars were sweeping devastatingly the

forward company's position Artillery support was not possible, for the leading Indian troops were very near the objective However, under cover of their own 3-inch mortar fire, the company made a determined attack, routed the enemy and captured its first objective Simultaneously the other companies also made a bold attack and secured the second objective By securing these two features 2 Rajputana Rifles enabled the rest of the Brigade force to pass through

4 Dogra left the Camp at 0530 hours on 12 May and secured its first objective Enemy light machine guns, medium machine guns and mortars tried to check the advance, but in vain One feature was captured at 1530 hours Then two companies moved forward and captured the main objective by 1630 hours Having accomplished its object the battalion returned to Naushahra at 2359 hours on 12 May

THRUST TOWARDS SAMANI-SADABAD AREA

The next operation was undertaken to clear enemy from Samani-Sadabad area, where enemy was holding the range of hills to the north from Pt 3571 to Pt 3705 A force, known as the Tiger column, was organised for this operation, and consisted of the following troops

(i) **19 Brigade**
 2 Rajputana Rifles
 1 Sikh Light Infantry

(ii) **80 Brigade**
 1/2 Punjab
 4 Dogra

(iii) **Supporting arms**
 7 Mountain Battery
 Troop 45 Field Battery
 Troop Scindia Battery
 One platoon 1 Mahar (Medium Machine Gun)

Tiger column concentrated in area Katora Khori and 1 Sikh Light Infantry started from concentration area at 2130 hours on 14 May A company, leading the advance, encountered enemy at dawn This opposition was overcome and another enemy position was also cleared by 0700 hours To secure the right flank, one company occupied Lambi Patti ridge But two 3-inch mortars, four medium machine guns and six light machine guns were firing incessantly from Chhawa Dhar The advance was slowed down when by 0800 hours the leading company was approximately 550 metres from its objective 2 Rajputana Rifles, on the left, had also encountered heavy small arms and mortar fire and had been pinned down Due to stiff enemy opposition, it was not possible to make further progress and the battalions were pulled out of the forward positions 1 Sikh Light Infantry, which had led the attack, suffered casualties of 2 killed and 12 wounded

The failure of the first attempt to clear the area Sadabad-Samani led to the launching of an operation on a bigger scale The enemy

pressure south of Naushahra had been increasing His main Headquarters was Bhimbar and his forward troops were overlooking the line of communication Jammu-Naushahra He had for some time been mortaring the road and had sown mines In order to make the line of communication secure, it was essential to hold all the high ground overlooking the road 1/2 Punjab had already captured Pt 3571, thus denying to the enemy direct observation of the road The more difficult task of capturing Chhawa ridge, to the west of Pt 3571, remained The enemy was holding this ridge in strength Two attacks to secure this ridge had met with failure As the capture of this ridge was of vital importance, a major operation with full fire support of armour, air and artillery had to be undertaken To give close support to the advancing troops by armour, a road was constructed through Pt 3052 and Pt 2786 to Kalal

On 31 May 1948 Commander 19 Brigade issued instructions for operation 'Ambala' to capture high ground Chhawa to Pt 3350 and destroy the enemy and his supply dumps in Sadabad and Samani The operation was to be carried out by 1 Kumaon Rifles and 4 Dogra, with 1/2 Punjab as the Brigade reserve

For this operation 1 Kumaon Rifles had under command one section medium machine guns, and in support

One squadron (less two troops) Central India Horse
5 Mountain Battery
Scindia Field Battery
Brigade mortars

C and D companies of 1 Kumaon Rifles left Pt 3052 at 2300 hours on 31 May 1948 for their first objective It was a dark night and the going was very bad, so instead of reaching their objective they arrived at another hill feature to the left of it However there was no enemy opposition and the objective itself was occupied before dawn After handing over this feature to a company of 4 Dogra, the two companies moved forward for their final objective Here too the going was very difficult, as they had to climb a steep ridge The result was that there was light before the companies could advance half the way to the hill top They were spotted by the enemy, who opened up with three 3-inch mortars and more than twelve automatics The advance was held up At this crisis of the battle the Commanding Officer decided to make a change in the plan of attack, going up by an easier climb and replacing C company by B company There was some difficulty in carrying out this plan, as the whole battalion was under intensive mortar and medium machine gun fire, so that it took about two hours for the two companies (B and D) to come to their new assault position At 0830 hours they started climbing up on to their objective The enemy spotted this new move and came behind them and opened up with automatics on the advancing companies The picquet commander of 1 Sikh Light Infantry at Pt 2999 who was keenly watching the engagement, sent out a platoon to attack

the counter-attacking enemy from the rear The platoon opened up on the enemy, who thought that he was encircled and quickly pulled out The two Kumaon companies moved on to their objective and captured it at 0930 hours.

4 Dogra then led the attack on Chhawa ridge They had concentrated at Kalal valley by 0545 hours on 1 June and by 1200 hours had secured the objective without suffering any casualty On 2 June C and D companies of 4 Dogra searched Sadabad village. On 3 June, two companies 1 Kumaon Rifles raided Samani, while one company protected the right flank A troop of Central India Horse was in support The enemy had already pulled out of the village At 1200 hours, when 1 Kumaon Rifles was returning to the base, the enemy from Kalidhar opened up with twelve mortars He fired approximately 400 shells, but inflicted no casualty

19 Brigade had carried out the operation successfully Enemy was driven from Chhawa ridge and Sadabad-Samani and a serious threat to the line of communication Jammu-Naushahra was removed

TROOP DISPOSITIONS IN JHANGAR AREA

Meanwhile 50 Para Brigade in Jhangar was up against considerable opposition After recovering from the defeat sustained in March 1948, which led to the loss of Jhangar, the enemy made preparations for recovering Jhangar Jhangar was of great strategic importance to him, for it blocked his line of communication Mirpur-Punch and was situated at the road junction Kotli-Mirpur-Naushahra It could also be used as a spring-board for mounting operations against him towards Mirpur and Kotli

No wonder the hostiles made a determined effort on 10 May to recapture Jhangar They mainly consisted of Sudhans, Pakistani regular troops, Kashmir State army deserters, and newly recruited 'Azad Kashmir' troops. The majority of Sudhans and Punchis were released soldiers of the old Indian Army They were all trained, stubborn fighters and seldom left their casualties behind But once given a knock out blow they invariably dispersed

In order to recapture Jhangar and disrupt the Indian lines of communication, they had ringed Jhangar with a number of outposts and picquets By the beginning of May

(a) One enemy battalion was holding small hills running parallel to northern ridges from area Darhal Fort to Tain with picquets at Pt 3606, Tain, Pandhar, Dhariot, Thati and Lam

(b) Strength and disposition of enemy holding the general line from Sabzkot to Baroh i e , the area south of the southern ridges were as follows

i) Baroh	—200 Pathans
ii) Danna	—One company

iii) Uparla Sakiran —One company
iv) Pt 3430 —HQ plus one company
v) Ring contour —One infantry battalion
vi) Sabzkot —One infantry battalion
vii) Bhed —Administrative base
viii) Pt 4048 —One infantry battalion

(c) In Tharochi valley the enemy had one company from one of the battalions mentioned in (b) disposed as follows

i) Pt 3150 —One company less one platoon
ii) *Nala* —One platoon

50 Para Bde's area of responsibility was west of a general line from Pt 3327 to Pt 3283, Jhangar, all inclusive In the east the Brigade had common boundary with 19 Brigade 50 Para Bde was organised into the following three sections

(a) 1 Rajput held the northern ridges The picquets were manned as follows

i) Pt 3638 —One company
ii) Ring contour —One company
iii) Ring contour —One company less one platoon
iv) Pt 3327 —One company ex Punjab Regiment attached to 1 Rajput

(b) 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry and 3 (Para) Rajput held the southern ridges as follows

i) Pir Satwan —3 (Para) Mahratta LI less one company
ii) Matlasi —3 (Para) Rajput less two companies
iii) Pt. 3477 —One company 3 (Para) Rajput
iv) Susiloti Dhar —One company 3 (Para) Rajput

(c) Jhangar Camp was held by ad hoc troops and administrative companies of infantry units Supporting arms were also disposed in the Camp area. The artillery Observation Posts were located on all important picquets wherefrom they could direct the shoot The Visual Control Post was located in the Camp near the Brigade Command Post Tanks were employed for thickening up the defence One company 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry was the Brigade reserve

In the first week of May, enemy activities were mainly confined to mortaring and sniping the Indian picquets Small reconnaissance patrols used to approach the positions under cover of darkness, but were invariably beaten back by the Indian troops There were minor patrol clashes almost daily. The picquet at Darhal was attacked several times by the enemy but the attacks were repulsed. Pir Satwan and Matlasi picquets were also unsuccessfully attacked twice Enemy activities were on the increase and large parties could be seen moving in area Bhed, Sabzkot and Pt 3150. On 7 May one of the Indian patrols bumped into

enemy in strongly entrenched positions. Another patrol was engaged by enemy in Tharochi valley The enemy was rapidly building up in Bhed valley and Sabzkot area for an attack on Jhangar Brigadier Usman, therefore, ordered all units to be extra vigilant All picquets were warned and intensive patrolling was ordered Night raids into enemy positions were organised A very successful night raid was carried out on 7 May by 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry on enemy positions at Pt 3150 The jittery enemy opened up with every weapon he had, and kept on firing at random throughout the night 7/8 May Another raid was carried out on MG Hill by the same unit during night 8/9 May.

Brigadier Usman took some more steps to deal with the enemy threat to Jhangar. 22 Field Company RIE developed a track to an important hill with a view to sending armour assistance to the picquet, if required The track was developed in five days and made fit for tanks

THE DEFENSIVE BATTLE OF JHANGAR

At 0100 hours on 10 May Jhangar was quiet The sniping and mortaring of picquets had stopped and except for the sentries everybody relaxed Suddenly, at 0145 hours Pir Satwan, Matlasi Hill and Tharochi valley resounded with bursts of light and medium machine guns and crunches of mortar fire At 0200 hours enemy put heavy mortar fire on the picquets at Pt. 3638 and Pt 3574. The defensive battle for Jhangar had begun 'Azad Kashmir' Brigade with two battalions attacked picquets No. 1,3 and 16. Other two battalions attacked picquets 7, 8, 9, mainly astride the road Mirpur-Jhangar One battalion attacked picquets 11, 12, 13, another battalion (4/13 Frontier Force Rifles—Pakistani regular troops) attacked picquet No 14 The enemy used twelve 2-inch mortars, sixteen 3-inch mortars and fifteen medium or light machine guns The severest attack was in area Matlasi Hill Pt 3574 was the vital ground for the defence of Jhangar, and was known as Matlasi Hill It directly overlooked the road junction and the area around it where the Brigade was encamped, and, therefore, formed the key position in the defences The enemy launched furious attacks to capture this vital ground The brunt of the attack was borne by two sections of 3 (Para) Mahratta LI in an isolated position, i e., picquet No 14 The enemy using regular forces this time put in three companies of 4/13 Frontier Force Rifles in an all out attack on the picquet after mortaring it throughout the night, dropping 200 mortar bombs from Pt 3150 and Keri ridge The fire from enemy medium machine guns and small arms was so intense that it emptied the sand out of the sand-bagged sangars, inflicting five casualties The remaining twenty gallantly hung on, using grenades and bayonets as the enemy flung themselves at the wire By 0530 hours the enemy had worn himself out Accurate mortar fire from the detachment attached to D company in the rear, combined with artillery support, worked havoc with the forming up places of the enemy As a troop of tanks from the Central India Horse rumbled

forward at 0530 hours, the enemy fled carrying the wounded with him The depleted strength of the troops did not permit any pursuit, the ground was too broken for the tanks to follow The Mahratta casualties were 6 wounded Enemy casualties were approximately 75, of which 34 dead bodies were counted around the picquet

Simultaneously with the attack on picquet No 14, enemy launched attacks on picquets in area Matlasi Hill One enemy battalion approached Matlasi picquet and engaged the bunkers with grenades The posts of Matlasi picquet were mutually supporting, and thus when the enemy attempted to encircle the forward post his right flank was exposed, and received withering fire from light and medium machine guns Enemy soon fled in disorder, leaving his dead and wounded behind

Picquets at Pt 3638 were also mortared and sniped by the enemy from Pt 3606, Pandhar and Dhariot Twice he attempted to rush the picquets, but was beaten back with heavy casualties

By 0600 hours on 10 May all the attacks were repulsed Enemy, however, continued to mortar and snipe the picquets Indian patrols collected a large number of weapons, equipment and ammunition, including light machine guns, rifles, mortars and sten guns

The hostiles remained active in the north. They had time to dig in at Pandhar ridge Indian picquets were constantly mortared and sniped throughout night 10/11 May and 11 May At 0440 hours on 11 May approximately 250 enemy attacked one picquet from north and north-east, approaching it under cover of darkness The attack was repulsed by 1530 hours South of Jhangar it was quiet Major-General Atma Singh, the Divisional Commander, came to Jhangar and after studying the situation ordered 19 Brigade to carry out an operation behind enemy positions on Pandhar ridge Accordingly, two companies of 4 Dogra (19 Brigade) left Naushahra Camp at 0530 hours on 12 May and advanced on a track between ring contour and Pt 3030 They captured two hills by 1530 hours against heavy opposition A third hill was next attacked and captured at 1630 hours When the enemy found himself being outflanked, he withdrew towards the north-west The artillery successfully engaged the fleeing enemy As the setting sun cast its last lingering light over Jhangar Camp, the valiant defenders relaxed for a peaceful night They had won the defensive battle of Jhangar with sheer determination and will power against tremendous odds

SABZKOT AND MG HILL

After winning the defensive battle of Jhangar, Brigadier Usman turned his attention on clearing the hostiles from area Sabzkot Sabzkot was an advance base for them, protecting their line of communication—Mirpur-Palahal Khurd-Panjan Enemy was particularly active in area Pt. 3150 and M G Ridge His forward positions were approximately 1800 metres from the Indian posts Indian patrols could not get

anywhere near M G Ridge due to heavy enemy fire from bunkers in that area It was also suspected that enemy was holding Pt. 3900 and that his reserves were in Pallan His other positions in the locality were at Pt 3606 and Bhed Total number of hostiles in this area was estimated to be two companies.

Brigadier Usman decided to carry out an operation for raiding Sabzkot and clearing the enemy in the area Advance on Sabzkot from area Bhed was not possible due to the left flank being exposed, and due to the nature of the ground From Bhed troops had to climb up to get to Sabzkot over very rugged and thickly forested hills Therefore, the alternative line of approach to Sabzkot via M G Hill was the best line of advance M G Hill was, however, overlooked from Pt 3900 at a close range So it was of vital importance to capture Pt 3900

Troops available in 50 Para Bde for the raid on Sabzkot were.

- 3 (Para) Mahratta LI less one company (from Pir Satwan picquets)
- One camp company made up from various other units
- One troop of field regiment
- 7 Mountain Battery
- One troop of Stuart tanks
- 2 Rajputana Rifles (borrowed from 19 Bde for this operation)

The task of clearing enemy from area M.G Hill was given to 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry as the feature was in front of Pir Satwan, while 2 Rajputana Rifles was to put in a flanking attack behind the M G. Hill along Keri and Pallan 3 (Para) Mahratta LI formed up by 0430 hours on 21 May, and artillery concentration was put down on M G Ridge according to the plan Then B company on the right and A company on the left advanced for the attack D company followed up closely on the right The enemy held fire till the companies reached within 130 metres of his first line of bunkers and then opened up with all he had Still both the companies assaulted undeterred. Tanks had already blasted the bunkers on the forward slopes of the hill before H hour The right company progressed well in spite of heavy fire from the left shoulder of the hill One platoon of the right company reached the top at 0610 hours The left company was, however, less fortunate, for the company commander had been wounded on the low slopes of the hill The company was still struggling up the hill against heavy and accurate fire from the top when the platoon of the right company reached the top

Two minutes after the platoon reached the top (i.e at 0612 hours) a heavy counter-attack by approximately 200 enemy developed from the south-west and pushed back the platoon of the Mahrattas from the top Tanks now reported an enemy party of 500 strong advancing towards M G. Ridge from the south They were beyond the range of tank guns and so artillery took them on and reported several direct hits 3 (Para)

Mahratta LI pushed forward their reserve company behind the right company to help in stopping the enemy from coming down the slopes At 0820 hours A and B companies mustered again for a combined assault .Hand to hand fighting took place but they could not reach the top The enemy was in larger numbers than estimated and was well dug in His number seemed undiminished as he came up from the reverse slopes The Mahrattas now realised that M G Ridge was held in strength and there were three enemy locations on the hill, all mutually supporting The main position was on Pt 3900 which could not be attacked without going over M G Ridge Total enemy strength in this area was two battalions with six medium machine guns and two 3-inch mortars He used a special type of incendiary to set fire to the ground in front of the Mahrattas As the enemy strength was more than could be dealt with by the number of troops available, it was decided to break off the engagement The Mahrattas managed to break contact with the aid of artillery and tank fire by 1210 hours, and returned to Pir Satwan Total casualties of the Mahrattas were 8 killed and 29 wounded

The flanking attack by 2 Rajputana Rifles also did not yield much results B company on the right advanced along Keri spur and C company advanced on the left flank A company was in reserve D company less one platoon, with troops of Central India Horse, operated on the right and north of objective. After artillery concentration on Pt 3150, B company assaulted and captured it at 0530 hours In daylight enemy fired at the captured feature with 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns from the flank Under cover of mortar and medium machine gun fire, the hostiles (approximate strength two companies) advanced towards the feature 2 Rajputana Rifles was also subjected to heavy fire from M G Ridge, and was, therefore, ordered at 0945 hours to withdraw to Pir Satwan by the shortest route The casualties of 2 Rajputana Rifles were 1 killed and 2 wounded

Not only did the enemy repulse the attack on M G Hill but he also subjected the Brigade Tactical Headquarters at Pir Satwan to heavy mortar fire About 24 bombs fell around the Pir Satwan picquet An enemy party tried to approach the picquet from the south but the tanks intercepted them and inflicted heavy casualties Total Indian casualties in this operation were 9 killed and 33 wounded Enemy casualties were 46 killed (counted) and estimated 110 killed or wounded

Various factors contributed to the failure of the attack on the M G Hill. Of these the most important was under-estimation of the enemy strength, which on Pt 3150 and Pt 3900 had been estimated to be one company, whereas at least four companies with two medium machine guns and one 3-inch mortar were encountered. In area M G Ridge enemy strength had been estimated to be one company only, whereas 3 (Para) Mahratta LI bumped into at least one battalion in well dug positions, and the counter-attack was made by another battalion of hostiles with four medium machine guns and two 3-inch mortars The enemy

positions were mutually supporting, well-sited and well-manned His flanks were well protected either by nature of the ground or with his medium machine guns and mortars He held his defences in depth and kept a large reserve for counter-attack He had but a few bunkers on the forward slopes while his main defences were well camouflaged on the top and on reverse slopes

Surprise could not be achieved as the enemy was holding higher ground Night attack was not considered possible owing to the difficulty of the ground, moreover full use of the Indian fire power could not be made by night Hence it had to be a frontal attack in full view of the enemy at dawn The advance of 2 Rajputana Rifles was planned to divert enemy attention from M G Ridge towards the north A deception plan was attempted but did not prove very effective Also contributing to the failure was insufficiency of fire power. There were 8 guns (4 Field and 4 Mountain) in support of the attack These were not sufficient to keep the enemy's head down, or destroy his mutually supporting positions. Enemy bunkers on the reverse slopes and on the two crests of Pt 3900 could not be neutralised when the guns were engaged in stopping enemy reinforcement concentrations in the area of Sabzkot Another cause of failure was the lack of timely air support A sortie was asked for over the target at 0630 hours but no aircraft arrived before 0930 hours due to bad weather

The inadequacy of medical cover was also keenly felt during these operations There was insufficient medical cover for a Brigade in Jhangar area Lives of some men could probably have been saved if there was a surgical team in Jhangar Instead of full allotment of a Field Ambulance, Jhangar had only one detachment of Field Ambulance. The nearest Surgical Unit was 26 km away in Naushahra The nearest X-Ray Unit was 140 km away in Jammu

DEATH OF BRIGADIER USMAN

The month of June was comparatively quiet The enemy continued mortaring the Indian positions all around Jhangar. His fighting patrols were engaged successfully and dispersed by artillery on many occasions Patrol clashes were frequent The ring of enemy defensive positions around Jhangar was many times engaged by RIAF aircraft, artillery and mortars Night raids were frequently carried out against them. Enemy attempted to raid the Indian picquets many times, but was always repulsed

Early in July the tempo of enemy activity increased Reconnaissance report revealed that the enemy had brought up guns to pound the positions in Jhangar At 1840 hours on 3 July, 4 enemy shells landed in the north-west of the Camp Next moment 8 more shells landed right into the gun area Brigadier Usman, who was sitting under a rock near Brigade Headquarters, called the chief gunner and ordered him to engage Pt 3150 with guns immediately The chief gunner was taken by

surprise when asked to engage a point in the west when the guns were firing from the south and south-west Brigadier Usman repeated his orders. Only then the chief gunner realised that Pt. 3150 was the obvious place where enemy could place his Observation Post and have a direct view of the Camp as well as those places where shells were falling Usman's eight guns engaged the target indicated, and the enemy shelling stopped Brigadier Usman took advantage of this lull to move from the rocks to a bunker. As he was just entering the door of the bunker, one 25-pounder shell landed near him, killing him and wounding another officer and two Other Ranks Thus died Brigadier Usman, 'the Hero of Naushahra', in a blaze of glory

Lieut-Colonel Lachman Singh, Commander 3 (Para) Rajput, took over the command of the brigade The garrison of Jhangar passed through a severe ordeal Enemy dropped approximately 800 shells overnight All communications to the picquets were cut The hostiles, estimated to be one company, advanced in front of Matlasi picquet and set fire to the bunkers constructed for Day Observation Post The situation was saved by the doggedness of the troops who stuck to their picquets, and the wonderful counter-battery work of the gunners Total Indian casualties from shelling on 3 July were 5 killed and 8 wounded

After 3 July enemy continued to shell the Camp every night In spite of this shelling no big attack was launched by him

It was suspected that the enemy was using Khambah Fort, to the south of Jhangar, as an Observation Post for the artillery shoot on Matlasi picquet It was, therefore, decided to capture the fort 3 (Para) Mahratta LI attacked and captured it without much opposition on 10 July, and put a platoon picquet there. At the same time one company of 1 Rajput captured Gari Forest, a hill feature south-east of Jhangar, which offered a good line of approach to the enemy to Matlasi picquet. A two-platoon picquet was established on this feature. After the establishment of these two picquets it was felt that Jhangar was secure

50 Para Brigade had moved forward in Jammu and Kashmir area at the beginning of the operations and had played an important part in beating back enemy attacks and consolidating its positions in Jhangar-Naushahra area The brigade, which was tired and had suffered substantial casualties, was pulled out for rest and reorganisation On 2 July 50 Para Brigade opened up in Miran Sahib (Jammu), and on the same day 268 Brigade started functioning at Jhangar.

Note

1 The RIAF from Amritsar supported 19 Bde, but was not under its command

CHAPTER XIII

The Relief of Punch

(January-November 1948)

The story of the heroic defence of Punch against tremendous odds deserves to be recorded in some detail In a previous chapter we have described how on 20 November 1947 a column for the relief of Punch had set out from Uri, but had been halted before a blown up bridge at Kahuta, 13 km short of Punch 1 (Para) Kumaon less one company under command Lieut-Colonel (later Brigadier) Pritam Singh had scrambled across the stream and joined the Punch garrison consisting of 1 K.I , 8 K I and 9 K I —approximately 2000 State Force troops. Thus reinforced, the Punch garrison held out for full one year until it was finally relieved

THE EARLY MONTHS

The problem of the defence of Punch was indeed very complex. Refugees, both Hindus and Sikhs, numbering about 40,000 had poured into Punch to escape being annihilated by the raiders The enemy ring around Punch was tightening and it was quite obvious that the raiders aimed at reducing the garrison by hunger and by fire power Due to Punch being surrounded, land communication with the outside world was cut off and the need for an air strip was greatly felt, the strip was built and later extended by the middle of December 1947 to enable Dakota aircraft to land. Consequently evacuation of the civilians now commenced and a supply link was established

With the intention of finding out the enemy strength and collecting grain, Brigadier Pritam Singh issued instructions on 1 January 1948 for capturing three hill features north of Punch One company of 1 (Para) Kumaon attacked and captured hill feature and village Dalan. 8 Kashmir Infantry also captured hill feature and village Naraket before daybreak Another company of 1 (Para) Kumaon, however, failed to capture hill feature near Rabatanwali As they were crouching lower down the slope for the attack on the feature they suffered casualties from enemy fire Soon after daybreak the enemy started closing in on this company from all sides But for the artillery support it would have been well nigh impossible for the Kumaon company to extricate itself Luckily, in spite of strong enemy pressure the withdrawal started at 1700 hours and was successfully carried out.

In the first week of January 1948 the Punch garrison was again reinforced A and C companies of 3/9 Gorkha Rifles were moved by air from Jammu to Punch between 4 and 6 January 1948 The Punch garrison now consisted of 1 (Para) Kumaon less one company, A and C

To augment the foodstocks, the Punch Brigade carried out harvesting operations in the neighbouring enemy-held territory. The troops escorted batches of refugees to harvest standing crops through a hail of bullets At 2000 hours on 7 February three companies 1 (Para) Kumaon, two companies 1 Kashmir Infantry and one company Punch Scouts proceeded on grain gathering operations to village Khanetar. The operation involved capturing two hills and holding off the hostiles Two Kumaon companies came under heavy opposition from ridges east, north and south of the position from hostiles estimated to be approximately 1200 Two fierce enemy counter-attacks followed in quick succession but they were repulsed A company 3/9 Gorkha Rifles was sent on the morning of 8 February to support the withdrawal of the column, which returned to base safely.

B and D companies of 3/9 Gorkha Rifles arrived from Jammu by air between 4 and 10 February. Thus strengthened, the Gorkhas got ready to carry out a sweep of enemy held area. The operations began during 14/15 February The plan was for B company, supported by D company, to capture the hill feature in front and exploit to Pt 4024, and for C company, supported by A company, to capture the ridge running south. The column consisting of 3/9 Gorkha Rifles and one company of 1 (Para) Kumaon left the camp at 1800 hours on 14 February with the intention of capturing Kosaliyan and the hill feature The column marched to the foot of the hill and occupied the village Kosaliyan by 2200 hours without any opposition Then the attack was launched and enemy offered fierce resistance up till 0230 hours on 15 February, after which he yielded ground B and C companies leading the assault secured their objectives

After B company had secured its objective, and consolidated its position, D company got ready to exploit to Pt. 4024. A section of No 10 platoon was sent forward as an outpost on a feature some 180 metres to the north At daybreak on 15 February the outpost came under heavy mortar and automatic fire It was overlooked by a strong enemy position at Pt 4024 Therefore the Commanding Officer ordered Havildar Lalbahadur, commanding No 10 platoon, to get his section back as best as he could The section crawled back to the main position, but two men lay wounded at the outpost and could not return unaided Havildar Lalbahadur himself went forward to get the wounded back When he broke cover, he was wounded in the shoulder. Regardless of his personal safety, he crawled forward over 180 metres of bullet swept ground and helped the two wounded men of his platoon to return safely to the main position Later during the day D company led an attack and captured Pt 4024. The Gorkhas now held the whole ridge for a distance of about one and a half km Enemy tried to infiltrate in the new positions during the night but his attempts ended in failure The column remained on the ridge till the refugees had collected about 75 tonnes of grain and brought it back to Punch Having accomplished its object the column returned to base by 2200 hours on 18 February Indian

casualties in this engagement were 2 killed and 11 wounded, while 70 hostiles were killed.

On 1 March 1948, 1 (Para) Kumaon and two companies 8 Kashmir Infantry were assigned the task of capturing the Khanetar ridge in order to collect grain for the civilian refugees The commander of 1 (Para) Kumaon issued instructions for the attack on the ridge The plan was for three columns to leave the camp at 1800 hours on 1 March, and move uphill simultaneously along the three spurs leading to their objectives One column, consisting of two companies of 8 Kashmir Infantry, was to secure the left spur Another column, comprising D and A companies 1 (Para) Kumaon (followed by Battalion Headquarters and Brigade Headquarters) was to secure the middle spur—the main objective (i e the feature overlooking village Khanetar from the west) The third column, consisting of B and C companies 1 (Para) Kumaon, was to secure the right spur Three detachments of mortars and three detachments of medium machine guns (1 Mahar) were under command of the battalion. A battery of mountain guns was in support

All the three columns moved uphill simultaneously at night along the three spurs leading to their objectives At about 0400 hours on 2 March, the middle column reached within 360 metres of its objective In spite of the steep climb through thorny scrub and some enemy opposition, it secured the objective The column suffered only 5 casualties—1 killed and 4 wounded At about the same time (0530 hours on 2 March) the right hand and left hand columns also secured their objectives after some resistance Thus by 0600 hours on 2 March the Khanetar ridge was firmly secured. However, supporting arms and entrenching tools, which were being brought on mules, did not reach till about 0800 hours, as there was no mule track in existence The mortars and medium machine guns had to be manhandled for a distance of more than a km to reach the main ridge The troops had started digging in when at daybreak the enemy commenced sniping the forward positions from northeast and easterly directions Very heavy and effective sniping continued up to 1100 hours, when the enemy resistance was wiped out by the supporting arms and air bombardment and strafing A patrol sent out to search the area found seven enemy dead Documentary evidence recovered from the dead bodies showed that they were men from 3/16 (Para) Punjab of the Pak Army Total Indian casualties were 7 killed and 8 wounded

Having accomplished the task, the columns (including two companies 3/9 Gorkha Rifles who had come up to help in collecting grain) withdrew from the ridge at 1130 hours on 5 March and reached Punch at 1600 hours

AIR SUPPLY

While the Punch Brigade was consolidating its position and harvesting grain, No 12 RIAF Squadron was playing an important part

in transporting supplies. In January two Dakotas, in rotation, were continuously employed in carrying food and ammunition supplies from Jammu to Punch and Naushahra The weather, however, was not always favourable Rain often rendered Jammu airfield unserviceable But even this could not deter the squadron, and as an alternative, supplies were carried from Amritsar Refugees and casualties were flown back on the return trip from Punch In spite of all precautions, a Dakota was hit by machine gun fire A bullet hit the oil sump and the pilot carried out a remarkable emergency landing at Punch Necessary repairs were carried out within a few hours of the incident by the technicians flown from Agra, which enabled the pilot to fly more sorties.

Air Commodore Mehar Singh, DSO, AOC No. 1 (Ops) Group, RIAF, carried out a novel experiment of bombing from a Dakota aircraft He fitted four 250-lb bombs to one of the squadron aircraft and carried out the operation personally The experiment proved a success Subsequently four more aircraft were fitted with bomb racks for use in emergency

In February 1948 there were 3 aircraft of No 12 RIAF Squadron at Jammu carrying troops, ammunition and equipment to the Punch garrison and returning with refugee women and children. When Jammu airfield was rendered unserviceable by bad weather after 19 February, the detachment started functioning from Ambala A total of 307 sorties were flown during the month of February

The general plan for the month of March was to provide the garrison at Punch with a reserve of one month's supply of all its requirements, this involved a total of 420 sorties in addition to the normal commitment of 7 sorties per day required for keeping the Punch garrison supplied with its normal requirements The work was taken in hand vigorously and a total of eight aircraft were sent to the base of operations at Jammu The Commanding Officer, Wing Commander K L Bhatia, moved over to Jammu to facilitate operations. Brisk flying commenced right from the first day of the month Starting from 18 sorties a day on the 1st, the squadron reached a peak of 27 sorties per day Bad weather, however, hampered the operations On 5 March only one sortie could be carried out and the next day only nine sorties Then it rained heavily and operations had to be suspended for about a week From 13 to 17 March the squadron intensified its effort There was almost a stream of aircraft, one following the other in a two way traffic; one to Punch with badly needed arms, ammunition, and food, and the other to Jammu bringing back refugees and wounded soldiers

Entirely dependent on air supply, the Punch garrison faced a severe crisis when for the first time the enemy brought up 3 7-inch howitzers to shell the town and the airstrip At about 1815 hours on 17 March, enemy's first shell landed very near the airstrip. Only five minutes prior to that the last of the Dakotas had taken off safely for Jammu Enemy artillery continued shelling throughout the night 17/18

March. Some 400 shells were fired, fortunately they did not cause much damage. One of the shells landed near the Residency, in which C company 3/9 Gorkha Rifles was quartered, resulting in slight injury to one Gorkha Three direct hits on Moti Mahal (Brigade Headquarters) luckily caused no casualty Simultaneously, the enemy attacked picquet No 9 with one full battalion and several hundreds of armed civilians The attack continued from 1700 hours on 17 March to the dawn of 18 March, and was pressed to within 9 metres of the perimeter The 3 7-inch howitzer and a 4 2-inch mortar also supported the attack by heavy shelling. But the single company of 1 Kashmir Infantry holding the vital picquet beat back all the attacks with severe losses to the enemy The defenders suffered only seven casualties, including two killed

Enemy shelling continued on 18 March Picquet No 5, manned by D company 3/9 Gorkha Rifles received ten direct hits from enemy 3-inch mortar bombs, but there was no casualty During the evening enemy fired a few shells on Moti Mahal (Brigade Headquarters) but again there was no casualty. About twelve shells were fired on the town of Punch resulting in the death of two civilians On 20 March one Havildar was killed by an enemy 3-inch mortar bomb, which landed just outside picquet No 5

Brigadier Pritam Singh, the Punch Brigade Commander, had asked for two 25 pounders with ammunition, and gunners to man them The mountain guns at Punch were ineffective against the enemy's heavier guns shelling Punch Dakotas carrying the guns tried to land at Punch at about 1200 hours on 21 March, but the hostiles opened up rapid fire on the landing strip One Dakota was put out of action and others could not land. Air Commodore Mehar Singh, along with Major-General Kalwant Singh, had taken off for Punch in a Harvard aircraft and were watching this landing from the air They decided to postpone the operation, and to attempt a night landing the same day This time the Dakotas succeeded in landing the precious cargo safely at Punch It was a remarkable feat; only those who have landed in the short *kutcha* strip of Punch can appreciate the terrible risks of night landing without any night flying facilities. The Royal Indian Air Force had in fact saved the Punch garrison in a grave crisis; the two 25 pounders outranged hostile guns and helped the garrison to carry on the heroic struggle against the enemy till its final relief

On 22 March Royal Indian Air Force further increased their activity. Tempests bombed and strafed enemy positions successfully. Some Dakotas also dropped 500-lb and 1000-lb bombs on enemy positions Picquet No. 9 reported that 1000-lb bombs demoralised the hostiles a good deal, for they were seen carrying away a number of dead and wounded in the Rungad *Nala* area. The Dakotas came over during the day to drop supplies Enemy used 3.7-inch supercharge air bombs but without effect One Dakota did get a few holes from the air bursts,

but still reached Jammu safely At night the Dakotas dropped some 500-lb and 1000-lb bombs and the enemy artillery was silenced

Air activity continued on 23 March and a number of time bombs were also dropped There was no response from enemy artillery Air drops continued, bringing in supplies and ammunition Bunkers in camp and on picquets were strengthened and all the slit trenches were now provided with overhead protection against air bursts On 24 March Indian 25-pounders fired their first few shells and registered some of the more prominent targets Enemy was very quiet all day and night, even the sniping was very limited Probably they were recovering from the effects of air bombing The critical phase of the operations was over, Punch had been saved by the gallant efforts of the Royal Indian Air Force pilots

GORKHA RIDGE OPERATIONS

Nothing of importance happened till about the middle of April But on 14 April the Punch Brigade carried out an operation for the capture of the Gorkha Ridge The aim of this operation was to establish picquets with a view to making the landing strip safe from enemy shelling The Brigadier issued orders to C and D companies 1 (Para) Kumaon and 1 Kashmir Infantry Battalion to capture the ridge The operation took the enemy completely by surprise and the objectives were captured by 0630 hours with negligible opposition At 1215 hours a fighting patrol (one platoon strong) was sent up to Khari Dharamsal, about 900 metres from the position, with the intention of sweeping the area The position was consolidated and the Brigade Commander was now prepared to probe further into enemy defensive positions He ordered D company to capture Faqir Dara ridge At 0030 hours on 15 April a fighting patrol of D company advanced towards the objective When approximately 90 metres away from the feature, enemy (one platoon strong) was seen digging trenches on the same feature The forward platoon charged with fixed bayonets, and 19 hostiles were killed When an enemy automatic (Bren) opened up from the next hillock, the patrol commander ordered his second platoon to attack the position The enemy fled In the meantime, another automatic opened up from a third position This was a dominating position, and the patrol commander attacked this feature with his third platoon Once again the enemy fled The hostiles launched two counter-attacks in quick succession, at 0600 hours and at 0830 hours on 16 April Both these counter-attacks were repulsed Indian casualties were 2 killed and 6 wounded; enemy casualties were 22 killed and 40 wounded

Another fierce action took place the next day An enemy observation post was located on Pt 5724 which was directing the shelling of the Bde HQ and the airfield by a 3 7-inch howitzer To eliminate this important OP, two coys of 1 K I and two coys of 8 K I. under the command of Lt-Col Hira Nand Dubey were ordered to

capture Pt. 5724 The State troops assembled at picquet No 9 and moved off towards the objective at 2200 hours on 17 April The route was a narrow track along the top of the ridge The enemy was holding Pt 5724 with three coys, and had mined and booby trapped the few approaches The attackers, however, launched their assault in spite of the mines and booby traps blowing up in their midst. Thirty five of the State troops were killed, and Lt-Col Hira Nand Dubey was himself wounded, but the assault was pressed home most gallantly and the vital hill top was captured, and remained in Indian hands till the end.

CONTINUING SKIRMISHES

A long range patrol consisting of A, C and D companies 1 (Para) Kumaon, with under command one 3-inch mortar and one medium machine gun, started at 1900 hours on 25 April to establish a firm base and secure Pt 5024 with a view to penetrating the enemy position towards Madarpur At 1900 hours on 25 April the column advanced from base and approached the distant objective the next evening, A company leading followed by Tactical Headquarters, D company, two platoons of Scouts, and C company with supporting arms under command. As the track leading to the objective was very steep and stony, supporting arms which were being carried on mules were sent back to the base At 0140 hours on 27 April when the column was about 720 metres from the saddle enemy opened fire from the ridge Thereupon C company was ordered to assault and capture the hill Not much opposition was encountered. By 0215 hours two platoons of C company and Tactical Headquarters were established on the hill, while A and D companies advanced to attack Pt 5024 They captured it against light opposition at 0630 hours D company established picquet on Pt 5024 and A company withdrew to Tactical Headquarters Shortly afterwards at 0800 hours enemy attacked the weakest position—a platoon post The attack was repulsed after bitter fighting lasting for fifteen minutes At 0900 hours enemy opened up with automatics and rifles on all the positions D, the forward company, was also withdrawn to Tactical Headquarters and a firm base was established At the same time one platoon of Scouts and two sections of A company reinforced the platoon post At 0930 hours the hostiles set fire to the jungle all round and tried hard to approach under cover of smoke Approximately one company of enemy was observed about 1450 metres to the north, and the artillery engaged and dispersed them At 1100 hours enemy mortared the position but was silenced again by artillery fire At 1500 hours orders for withdrawal were issued. The column reached the base safely at 0500 hours on 28 April

The positions of the enemy west of Punch were known to be mostly in the vicinity of Tetrinot Approximately two companies were holding the spur east of the ridge, and it was imperative to clear them It was planned to make a double attack—on the right 3/9 Gorkha Rifles were

to advance and capture the hill feature, while on the left 1 (Para) Kumaon were to infiltrate into Tetrinot silently A and B companies of the Gorkhas moved forward to capture the ridge, B company on the right and A company on the left When they reached half way to the objective, the enemy opened up with light machine guns and one medium machine gun Grenades also came hurtling down the ridge The Gorkhas continued the advance and when only 55 metres from the objective made a spirited attack and drove the enemy from the ridge after hand to hand fighting The objective was captured at 0130 hours on 18 May 1948 In this engagement the Indian casualties were 11 killed and 29 injured, including the Commanding Officer, Lieut-Colonel Palit, who was wounded by a grenade bursting quite close to him. 47 bodies of the enemy were counted It was estimated that 70 more were either killed or wounded A permanent picquet was established in this area to check any further enemy threat Two more picquets were established after similar attacks on 30 May

LINK-UP WITH PUNCH

By the end of May 1948 the Punch Brigade had succeeded in consolidating its position. The stage was now set for an operation ('Gulab') for the link-up with 19 Brigade's advance from Rajauri to Thana Mandi and Surankot, where the link-up was to be effected with a battalion of Punch Brigade from Punch. As already related, a force from Rajauri had cleared the area upto Thana Mandi in early May and gone back after establishing Birbal post. Only weak enemy forces now barred the advance of the column from Rajauri to Thana Mandi One weak enemy battalion was reported to be on the hills on both sides of the road Rajauri-Thana Mandi. East of the road one company was holding Pt. 5460 Enemy was also holding the Khabal defile, Dodesan Bala, Pt 5477 and Pt 4936 The commander of 19 Brigade planned to carry out the operation in three phases·

(i) Establishment of a firm base at Thana Mandi on D day
(ii) Advance on D+1 day to link up with the Punch column at Surankot, and
(iii) Capture of Mendhar .

1 Kumaon Rifles left Rajauri at 0530 hours on 15 June as advance guard of the column Others in the column were 1/2 Punjab, Troop Central India Horse, Engineers, 5 Mountain Battery, platoon medium machine gun (Mahar), animal transport and civilian guerillas as porters When 1 Kumaon Rifles reached 5 milestone they came under automatic and rifle fire from the hills on the left flank (i e villages Dodesan Bala and Dodesan Pain) The Commanding Officer made a quick appreciation and ordered A company to capture the hill feature near Dodesan Pain This feature was secured by 0700 hours Then A company advanced further and captured the high ridge near Dodesan Bala at 1030 hours B and C companies then cleared area on the left up to

6 milestone and Khabal defile respectively The column reached Thana Mandi at 2000 hours without further opposition

Meanwhile 2 Rajputana Rifles were providing right flank protection They had been given the task of clearing enemy pockets at Pt 5603 and the ridge beyond C company advanced from picquet Birbal at 0230 hours on 15 June On nearing the objective (Pt 5603) they came under small arms, medium machine gun, hand grenades and mortar fire But the objective was captured after hand to hand fighting Under cover of medium machine gun and mortar fire, enemy counter-attacked Pt 5603 with two companies. The attack was repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy B company then passed through C company, and though held up for a while, captured their objective and moved down to contact Tactical Headquarters at 8 milestone

D company 2/2 Punjab was assigned the task of making a night march and taking up positions on dominating hill feature Pt 5875, about 10 km behind the enemy lines The operation was carried out successfully and D company occupied the objective by 0430 hours on 15 June The houses on either side of the route were inhabited by hostile population Enemy was seen flashing torch signals from hills on either side of the route to one another, and it also kept on firing indiscriminately and ineffectively Until 0900 hours the presence of the Punjabis behind the enemy lines was not detected A platoon was sent to hold the defile on the other side of the road and another platoon to lay an ambush for the enemy retiring towards Thana Mandi The ambush was *partially successful, 4 enemy were killed and 9 wounded The platoon* sent on the other side of the defile also killed 7 and wounded 3. The Forward Observation Officer accompanying D company engaged the retiring enemy by artillery fire and inflicted about 30 casualties

During night 15/16 June, D company 1/2 Punjab advanced from Thana Mandi to secure the heights on the left of Dheri Ki Gali to enable the main column to pass through. B company moved early on 16 June to join D company After a stiff climb the main column reached Dheri Ki Gali at 1400 hours on 16 June The enemy sniped them ineffectively As the column neared Baflias civilians came out with white flags, and after being told that they need not fear, they went back to their villages very pleased. There was a large Muslim civil population on both sides of the Punch river. At about 2030 hours C company's forward platoon bumped into an enemy ambush party It was, therefore, decided to halt for the night near village Daraba A and C companies picqueted the camp

In the early morning on 17 June enemy started sniping and mortaring A and C companies Enemy mortars were silenced by the mountain guns. At 1030 hours the column started for Surankot, where 1 (Para) Kumaon and Brigadier Pritam Singh, MC, of the Punch Brigade had already arrived from Punch On the way enemy kept on firing from light machine guns but the column kept on moving and reached Surankot at 1300 hours and went into harbour.

While the main column advanced from Thana Mandi to Surankot, D company 2/2 Punjab and B company 2 Rajputana Rifles mopped up area Pt 5058. On 16 June after the column had passed through to Thana Mandi, D company 2/2 Punjab withdrew at 1830 hours to concentrate at Nirojal picquet An enemy ambush near 8 milestone was successfully tackled after fighting for about two hours by successive lay backs The company reached Nirojal at 2300 hours. At 0230 hours on 17 June, D company with B company 2 Rajputana Rifles (in area 8 milestone) under command went to clear Pt. 5058 and Pt 5570 respectively D company 2/2 Punjab drove off the enemy and captured Pt 5058 by 0600 hours, and found enemy bunkers in depth along the spur running westwards The bunkers were very strongly roofed and walled and were absolutely shell proof, with slanting loop holes All the bunkers were demolished and the dug-outs and trenches filled in One local confirmed that the enemy were about 80 strong with one 3-inch mortar on the previous night B company 2 Rajputana Rifles too accomplished its task after some fighting By 0630 hours both the ridges, Pt 5570 and Pt 5058 were cleared Having accomplished their tasks, both the companies returned to Rajauri

We have so far traced the progress of the Rajauri column to Surankot. The column coming from Punch had done equally well On 15 June 1 (Para) Kumaon started from Punch to link up with elements of 19 Brigade at Surankot The order of march was B company, Tactical Headquarters of Brig Pritam Singh, mortars, medium machine guns, C company, A company, Battalion Headquarters and D company The column crossed the starting point Kamsar-Punch road junction at 2010 hours on 15 June and reached Potha at 0700 hours on 16 June While advancing from Potha to Surankot, 1 (Para) Kumaon encountered opposition from enemy holding several hill features. B company advanced and captured Samkot after a spirited attack Then A and C companies advanced and cleared the other hills one by one against minor opposition At 0500 hours on 17 June the enemy started sniping A and B company positions To check this B company less one platoon pushed off at 0800 hours to take over the hill feature between A and C companies. The occupation of this feature was completed by 1000 hours Meanwhile D company, who were in reserve protecting the Regimental Aid Post and animal base were employed in constructing an "Air Field" for Austers to land in order to evacuate casualties By 1145 hours the landing strip was ready for the light planes At 1145 hours the whole battalion moved to the spring near Samkot, leaving a platoon of D company and Regimental Aid Post, as the Auster from Jammu was expected to land at any time. Supplies were dropped by two Dakotas At 1730 hours an Auster light aircraft piloted by Flying Officer Barty made a landing with consummate skill and daring and evacuated two seriously wounded casualties to Srinagar. This extraordinary feat saved the wounded Jawans from the terrible prospect of being left behind and

falling into the hands of the brutal enemy.

On 19 June a Brigade conference was held under Brigadier Pritam Singh and it was decided that the main force, which was to advance to Mendhar, would be split up into two columns:

(a) Flying column (1 Kumaon Rifles)—its task was to advance up to Mendhar and secure heights to its south and south-west.

(b) Mule column (1/2 Punjab, 1 (Para) Kumaon, all the refugees recovered and two platoons of Scouts)—it was to follow the Flying column and secure Dharamsal.

1 Kumaon Rifles concentrated near Samkot Ki Gali at 1830 hours on 19 June as advance guard The battalion left Samkot Ki Gali at 2015 hours and moved along the track towards Mendhar Some enemy opposition encountered on the way was wiped out and the Flying column reached Ari at 0500 hours on 20 June Meanwhile 1/2 Punjab advanced to clear the enemy from area of Dharamsal. C company secured hill feature on the right of Mendhar before daylight on 21 June. B and D companies tried to reach Dharamsal but the enemy had covered all approaches and brought medium machine guns on the high hills overlooking C company's position After an exchange of fire for several hours, the enemy cleared off. The leading Indian troops entered Mendhar at 0400 hours on 22 June.

As 1 (Para) Kumaon reached near Sakh Pir, it was fired on heavily by the hostiles dug in on Topa hill They used automatics and mortared the rear convoy Indian guns engaged enemy mortars, but due to enemy cross fire the leading company was held up. Appreciating the situation, a plan of attack was made A company 1 (Para) Kumaon was to secure the hill feature while D and B companies with Tactical Headquarters were to secure Topa B company 1/2 Punjab followed by C company was to sweep along the Topa ridge. The attack started at 0130 hours on 22 June, and by 0400 hours the Topa hill was secured The enemy fled, leaving behind mortars and medium machine guns. After capturing Topa hill the column resumed the advance via Panjal Gali, 1 (Para) Kumaon less two companies leading, followed by 1/2 Punjab, refugees, 1 Kumaon Rifles and Scouts. The whole force reached Punch on 23 June [1]

The Punch garrison was now strengthened and the threat to the security of Punch was removed The morale of the Punch garrison was high, and although later on the hostiles tightened the ring round Punch, it did not dishearten the garrison

Encouraged by the increase in the strength of the Punch garrison Brigadier Pritam Singh decided to undertake an operation—code-named "Shamsher"—for the capture of Toli Pir in order to relieve the enemy pressure on Indian troops at Chakothi in Uri area A column consisting of 1 (Para) Kumaon, two companies 1 Kashmir Infantry, one company 8 J and K Militia, 3/9 Gorkha Rifles, and one section of mountain guns on pack basis moved out and reached village Kosaliyan at 0500 hours

send flying columns to Kishtwar and Bhadrawah This would mean a serious threat to the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu-Srinagar line of communication. Moreover, the enemy was making efforts to isolate Punch The very heavy shelling of Jhangar and of Sadabad areas, the build-up of his forces at Baroh, the positioning of strong detachments south-east of Punch and his holding of Haji Pir Pass were probably a preliminary to a major offensive to capture Punch Therefore, Lieut-General Cariappa pleaded for continuing offensive operations His proposals were that Kargil must be reoccupied at once; one more attempt to capture Domel should be made, a thrust should be developed towards Mirpur in order to capture it or to secure the high ground north of it to prevent the enemy concentration in Punch area In short, the enemy must not be allowed to have the initiative, which he would have if the Indian troops went on the defensive. Lieut-General Cariappa's proposal for an advance to Mirpur, near Pakistan territory, was not accepted, but his proposal for an offensive operation for the capture of Kargil was agreed to As regards Punch it was felt that the garrison would be able to hold out until relief operations could be successfully carried out

Not only were the military objectives limited, but the effectiveness of the air effort was also limited due to political considerations. The Royal Indian Air Force "was unable to function in one of its primary roles, of indirect support and the isolation of the battlefield by attacks on the enemy's supply bases and main lines of communication—by interdiction Air-Commodore A M Engineer, Commanding No 1 Operational Group, was now even forbidden to attack enemy installations near towns such as Muzaffarabad and Mirpur, and also vital bridges of Lachhman Patan and Kohala over which enemy personnel and enemy equipment regularly passed This meant that the Air Force in J&K was never allowed full scope of action "[2]

A defensive policy was imposed on India by political considerations But Pakistan exploited this opportunity. While the Indian forces went on the defensive, enemy systematically carried out the build-up of his forces so as to endanger Leh and Punch The situation in September 1948, when a serious threat developed against Leh and Punch, was militarily unfavourable The problem was whether these two garrisons should be evacuated, or whether relief operations would be undertaken The latter alternative was at last decided and the relief of Punch was undertaken

OPERATION 'EMPTEE'

By September, the hostile ring around Punch had tightened The enemy brought up a 25-pounder and put the airstrip—the only link with the outside world—out of commission The crucial gun was silenced only after very special efforts and with a good deal of luck Since the 3 7-inch howitzer of the Punch garrison did not have the range to hit the

enemy 25-pounder from its position in Punch, it was decided on 25 September to take the howitzer to the high picquet No 8 above Punch There were no mules, and the way to the picquet was very difficult But the howitzer was somehow hauled up at night, taking 8 hours to travel the distance of only 8 km When the enemy 25-pounder started firing again at 1100 hours on 28 September, the Indian Observation Post quickly located the gun, and the howitzer silenced it within a few rounds Another version gives to the RIAF the credit for destroying the enemy 25-pounder by a lucky hit during the night bombing of the area by Dakotas. Whatever be the truth, the danger to Punch was clearly brought home when the enemy gun prevented the landing of planes at the airstrip

Intelligence and air reconnaissance reports indicated a heavy build-up in Bagh, an enemy base north-west of Punch, with the obvious intention of liquidating the Punch garrison The enemy was also active in the Rajauri sector, arming his sympathisers east of Rajauri A regular supply of arms from west to east was going on via Thana Mandi and Darhal One enemy battalion was in area Ramgarh-Naghun, another was astride road Rajauri-Thana Mandi, while a third was east of Rajauri, based at Kandi

The first phase of the operations for the relief of Punch comprised the capture of Pt 7710, a high feature dominating Thana Mandi, 19 km north of Rajauri On 11 September 1948, Lieut-General Cariappa ordered Major-General Atma Singh to plan an operation (code-named 'Emptee') for the capture of Pt 7710[3] In order to clear enemy from area Thana Mandi and Darhal it was necessary to capture Pt 7710, the highest feature in the Rajauri sector dominating the whole valley

The operation to capture Pt 7710 was undertaken under the personal direction of Major-General Atma Singh A series of hills, Pts 5460, 5603 and 6454 had to be captured leading up to Pt 7710 Major-General Atma Singh detailed 19 Brigade for this task On 19 September 1948 Commander 19 Brigade issued instructions for the capture of Pt 7710 in four phases In Phase I, 2 Rajputana Rifles, with under command detachment medium machine gun, was to advance from start line—track Kemari Gali and capture Pt. 5603 In Phase II, 2/2 Punjab less two companies was to advance from start line—Girjan—and clear Pt 5570 and exploit towards Pt 5973 In Phase III, 1 Kumaon Rifles, with under command a detachment medium machine gun, was to advance from area Darali and capture Pt 6454 In Phase IV, 1 Kumaon Rifles, with under command a detachment medium machine gun, was to capture Pt 7710. A troop of tanks Central India Horse, 7 Mountain Battery and a troop of 45 Field Battery were in support of the 19 Brigade

2 Rajputana Rifles left the concentration area at 2230 hours on 20 September and secured the firm base Kemari Gali at 0132 hours on 21 September without opposition. B company followed by A company

passed through the firm base and captured Pt 5460 by 0500 hours without any opposition C company now moved forward to secure Pt 5603 but was pinned down by machine gun, and rifle fire from Pt. 5603 and from Maharajpur ridge Under artillery concentration A company captured Pt 5603 at 0746 hours on 21 September

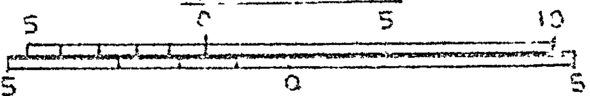
C and D companies 2/2 Punjab started from Rajauri at 2000 hours on 20 September and captured Pt 5058 by 2300 hours and then advanced towards Pt 5570 The advance was checked by stiff opposition from about 300 hostiles. Three enemy medium machine guns and five light machine guns opened up from Pt. 5570 and prevented the two companies from advancing further to Pt 5570 When the main column captured Pt 7710 the two companies of 2/2 Punjab withdrew to Rajauri

2 Rajputana Rifles having carried out its task of capturing Pt 5603, 1 Kumaon Rifles swept forward for the attack on Pt 6454 and, supported by artillery fire, drove out the enemy from this feature. It was estimated that the enemy casualties were 20 killed and 20 wounded The battalion stayed on this feature for the night. Enemy continuously fired during the night, and at first light mortared the battalion positions At 1250 hours on 22 September B, C and D companies advanced to establish a base on track approximately 1800 metres behind the objective (Pt. 7710) While advancing the forward companies were pinned down by heavy machine gun fire Luckily the feature was soon covered with thick fog, which enabled the forward companies to capture Pt 7710 Enemy withdrew towards Shimbli Gali Thus the important task of clearing enemy from area Thana Mandi and Darhal was accomplished on 22 September.

Artillery played an important part in this operation A troop of 45 Field Battery and 7 Mountain Battery provided the fire support "There was perfect co-operation between the Mountain Battery and the field troop The two moved forward by leap-frogging A special track was constructed overnight by the sappers. . It started raining and the ground became extremely soft and boggy It was with the greatest difficulty that the guns were brought into position by winching and manhandling Bulldozers were also helpful in pulling the guns The range to Pt 7710 was now about 8000 (yards). The guns fired day and night and a very accurate concentration was put on Pt. 7710 There was perfect co-operation between the two Field Observation Officers and the respective guns were responsive to the calls by both of them The mules braved the weather and almost performed acrobatics in gleefully treading perilous and narrow tracks A few of them however toppled over from great heights and were killed "[4]

PLANNING FOR THE LINK-UP WITH PUNCH

Meanwhile Lieut-General S M Shrinagesh, who had been appointed Corps Commander in overall command of J&K Force on 14 September 1948 was busy planning for operation 'Easy' for the final



LINK UP WITH PUNCH
SEP - NOV 1948
KILOMETRES
5 0 5 10
5 0 5
MILES
HOSTILES' CONCENTRATIONS
DISPOSITIONS OF INDIAN TROOPS
ADVANCE OF INDIAN TROOPS
N
BATAR N.
TO ALIABAD
MANDI R.
MANDI
PUNCH
RANGUR N.
PUNCH R.
SUSPENSION BRIDGE
TO HAJIRA
101 BDE
6876
20 NOV
19 BDE
7537
BHAGIOT
TOPA
5
CHHARAI
SURAN
10380
CHING
14
JHANGAR
JAMBUR
3754
KOT
PATHRADI
NAUSHAHRA
WIRELESS STATION
TO AKHNUR
DHARAMSALA
NIARI TAWI
4235
3239

link-up with Punch An attempt to link-up with Punch could be made either from the south, namely, via Thana Mandi or Rajauri, or from the north via the Haji Pir Pass Lieut-General Shrinagesh took into careful consideration the advantages and disadvantages of the two alternatives As regards the attack from the south it was important (before advancing to Punch from Thana Mandi or Rajauri) that his line of communication from Naushahra to Rajauri was secure and there was no pressure on Jhangar from the north There were already threats of enemy attack on the line of communication at Chingas It was, therefore, necessary to make plans for getting behind the enemy from Jhangar and holding the vital feature Pir Badesar This move would draw the enemy brigade away from the Rajauri-Mendhar track The next move would be to advance towards Potha from Thana Mandi, tying down the enemy brigade on the Thana Mandi-Potha track The advance from Rajauri to Punch could then be launched easily

As regards the attack from the north, more troops were required at Uri before the Haji Pir operation could be undertaken If it was decided not to mount operation 'Bison' (to capture Dras-Kargil-Marol), then this force would be available to advance down to the Haji Pir Pass from Uri If on the other hand operation 'Bison' was undertaken, then two extra battalions from Jammu Division would have to be sent to the assistance of Srinagar Division for this operation Lieut-General Shrinagesh favoured the plan to link-up with Punch from the north, namely, via the Haji Pir Pass, as it was a much shorter route

Lieut-General Cariappa did not approve of the plan for the link-up by the north route but sanctioned the link-up with Punch by the south route Accordingly, Lieut-General Shrinagesh ordered Major-General Atma Singh to plan for a link-up with Punch by the southern route with a view to.

(i) Reinforcing 101 Brigade (previously called Punch Brigade) by one infantry battalion

(ii) Bringing all units of 101 Brigade up to strength by moving reinforcements to Punch by the land route

(iii) Constructing a jeep track linking Rajauri-Punch

Major-General Atma Singh was further ordered to carry out Phase I (i e secure Pir Badesar) by 8 October, commence Phase II (i.e demonstrate north of Thana Mandi) by 10 October, and concentrate in Rajauri by 16 October the required force for operation 'Easy'—the link-up—and reinforcements awaiting despatch to Punch

On 6 October 1948 Army Headquarters (India) informed Lieut-General Cariappa that the build-up of enemy forces around Punch-Thana Mandi-Rajauri had increased considerably and, therefore, a very careful appreciation should be made on the conclusion of the operation for securing Pir Badesar before commencing the advance to Punch Thereupon slight modifications were made in the plan. On 7 October Lieut-General Shrinagesh informed Lieut-General

Cariappa that owing to recent enemy build-up south of Punch, a long time lag between Phase I and the main thrust to Punch was not desirable and, therefore, he had agreed to postpone Phase I (i.e capture of Pir Badesar) until 162 Brigade was concentrated in Jammu

On 9 October 1948, Major-General Atma Singh, Commander Jammu Division, made a plan for operation 'Easy' The force was to be under command Brigadier Yadunath Singh, Commander 19 Brigade, and was to consist of six infantry battalions plus one field battery and one mountain battery. It was to be divided into two columns, one column of three battalions under command Brigadier Umrao Singh, Commander 5 Brigade, and the other column of three battalions under command Lieut-Colonel Jagjit Singh Aurora, Commander 1/2 Punjab As a preliminary to the main operation, the deception plan was to be carried out about 12 October to secure Pir Badesar The main operation was to commence about 19 October with 5 Brigade advancing from Rajauri and securing Pir Kalewa ridge Lieut-Colonel Jagjit Singh's column was then to pass through, moving from south of Thana Mandi to secure a firm base in the area around Sangrot Having secured the firm base the intention was to advance to Potha with 5 Brigade and carry out operations from Potha for the link-up with Punch The Pir Kalewa sector was to be taken over by L of C troops from Rajauri, who were to remain in area Pir Kalewa-Sangrot until the jeep track was completed

A very important question was the availability of troops for the link-up with Punch To put a battalion into Punch to reinforce 101 Brigade, Cariappa felt that six battalions would be required Of these three could be found from his own resources The other three battalions would have to be found from outside Jammu and Kashmir The proposed jeep track from Thana Mandi to Punch would take at least three months to complete. During this period the enemy would try everything to prevent this road being constructed Protection for the engineering work might develop into a major operation. Both Lieut-General Shrinagesh and Major-General Atma Singh were of the opinion that, although the six battalions being used for operation 'Easy' could deal with the situation, it would be advisable to have a brigade of four battalions held in reserve in the Jammu area for any eventuality Lieut-General Cariappa, therefore, recommended to Army Headquarters that if the threat to East Punjab from Pakistan was not serious, 4 Infantry Division might be moved out of East Punjab to Jammu But General Bucher felt very uneasy at the prospect of weakening the defence of East Punjab by moving 4 Infantry Division to Jammu He informed Lieut-General Cariappa that it was a question of vital importance and would be referred to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. This Committee sanctioned, with some reluctance, a maximum of one brigade (162 Brigade) being pulled out of East Punjab

CAPTURE OF PIR BADESAR–OPERATION 'RANJIT'

The task of carrying out operation 'Ranjit' for the capture of Pir Badesar was given to 268 Brigade. 1/2 Punjab, 1 (Para) Kumaon and 1/1 Gorkha Rifles concentrated south of Darhal on 13 October 1948 The brigade plan was for 1/1 Gorkha Rifles less one company and one platoon to lead the attack and secure Kater and the high ground north of Giran Then 1/2 Punjab was to push on and capture Khalbahat Gala 1 (Para) Kumaon was to take the lead next and capture Pt 5432

At 2000 hours on 14 October the brigade moved out, 1/1 Gorkha Rifles leading, and the first objective, Kater, was secured without opposition. At 0300 hours on 15 October the Gorkhas came under heavy fire in Giran from 250 Sudhans armed with rifles, Brens and 3-inch mortars But the village was cleared by a spirited attack

Now 1/2 Punjab led the advance At 0600 hours on 15 October C company attacked Pt 3978, which was held in strength by the enemy Although the Subedar leading a platoon was mortally wounded by a bullet, this feature was also secured

1 (Para) Kumaon then continued the advance towards Pir Badesar. Artillery and air softened up enemy position at Paran, and B and C companies made a spirited attack and captured it against stiff opposition at 1300 hours Pir Badesar was captured by 1700 hours on 15 October The total casualties sustained by 268 Brigade were 14 wounded and 3 killed Enemy casualties were estimated to be 70 killed, 38 wounded, and 9 taken prisoner

Artillery played an important part in Operation 'Ranjit' also 26 guns took part and fired from three different directions The guns belonged to 5 and 7 Mountain Batteries, B Troop 45 Field Battery, F Troop 47 Field Battery, 50 Post Group and 36 Field Battery "This was mainly an artillery battle and all that the infantry had to do after the gunners had finished their work was simply to walk up to the objective and claim its capture Enemy counter-attacks were met with heavy concentrations and the enemy was completely routed " " it was necessary to take a field troop to a feature Pt 4622 i e 2200 feet (670 metres) above ground level The task was accomplished by the sappers in 13 days and a winding road of 5 miles (8 km) was built By manhandling the guns at narrow points and towing them by bulldozers at others, an inspiring example was set by the gunners and the sappers of endurance and hard work."[5]

Pir Badesar was a strong tactical locality, 1645 metres above sea level. It overlooked the Seri valley, protected Jhangar from the north and posed a direct threat to Kotli Its capture meant that Indian troops had got behind the enemy threatening Chingas from the west and had eliminated his strong points at Bagla and Pt. 4810 The chief advantage of operation 'Ranjit' was that it completely outwitted the enemy who could not correctly divine whether a serious threat was to develop against Punch or Kotli

strike, B company led the assault again and was ably supported by D company which made a spirited attack on the left flank The enemy was demoralised and beat a hasty retreat, losing 15 killed and 20 injured At 0100 hours on 27 October he launched a counter-attack which was easily repulsed In order to secure Pir Kalewa against any further enemy threat B company occupied the neighbouring feature at 1220 hours on 27 October after slight resistance

At 1900 hours on 27 October, 5 Rajputana Rifles moved through the Madras positions at Pir Kalewa to capture Pt 6407 B and D companies launched the attack at 0500 hours on 28 October Half way up the hill the companies were met by heavy machine gun fire For full five hours the companies struggled hard to overcome enemy resistance with the help of medium machine gun and artillery fire It was only at 1200 hours that the companies secured the feature Thus on 28 October the Brigade succeeded in securing the vital Pir Kalewa ridge

CAPTURE OF RAMGARH FORT AND BHIMBAR GALI

With the capture of Pir Badesar and Pir Kalewa, the stage was now set for the capture of Ramgarh Fort and Bhimbar Gali, preparatory to the capture of Mendhar and the advance to Punch Brigadier Yadunath Singh, commander of Durga Force, planned to make two brigades converge on Bhimbar Gali—5 Brigade Group, operating from Pir Kalewa and securing Pt 6980 to Bhimbar Gali and 19 Brigade Group capturing Pt. 6944 to Pt. 6360, while the role of the third brigade, the Rajauri Brigade, was of protecting the left flank of the two attacking columns It was to start phase I of the operation by capturing Pt 4844, Ramgarh Fort and Pt 6480 One troop Central India Horse and battery 17 Field Regiment were in support of the brigade for the operation

The 6/8 Gorkha Rifles, which was detailed to carry out phase I of the operation advanced on 4 November 1948 B company attacked and captured Pt 4642 at 0400 hours on 5 November without opposition. C company then swept through village Naghun and launched an attack on the main feature, Pt. 4844 The attack was so fast and sudden that the company was within 18 metres of its objective before the enemy started heavy firing Unfortunately the artillery support failed at this critical moment, as the W/T set suddenly went out of order This resulted in the loss of a precious hour when no artillery or tank fire was available, with the result that C company was compelled to withdraw about 360 metres. After the artillery and tanks had plastered the enemy position, C company made a spirited charge and captured the feature at 0900 hours An hour later B and D companies moved forward to attack Pt 4700 These two companies had to fight their way through jungle area between Pt 4844 and Pt 4700, which was reinforced by the enemy By 1720 hours B company had captured Pt 4700 and D company had established a picquet in the area after clearing it of enemy

2/2 Punjab now prepared to carry out its task of capturing Ramgarh Fort and Pt 6480 A section of medium machine guns was under command, and a troop of field battery and a troop of tanks in support of the battalion

In the evening on 7 November the 2/2 Punjab began its advance A company secured Three Pimples while B company secured Makot Tekri by 0600 hours without opposition D company, followed by C company then moved forward to capture Niganar feature When the leading troops were 360 metres from their objective the enemy opened up with four medium machine guns and about six light machine guns Artillery fire was directed against the enemy, and under its cover, A company launched an attack from the left flank to distract enemy attention while D and C companies made a frontal attack For full four hours the companies struggled hard to overcome enemy opposition It was only at 1120 hours on 8 November that the enemy pulled out and the feature was occupied C company then put in an attack on Pt 4956 and occupied it after considerable opposition The positions could not be consolidated till 1500 hours. Further advance towards Ramgarh on the same day was considered unwise on account of replenishment difficulties The battalion, therefore, harboured for the night During the first day of this operation, the battalion suffered 4 casualties—2 killed and 2 wounded

At 0600 hours on 9 November A company left the night harbouring area and occupied Harjilali ring contour by 0700 hours against minor opposition B and D companies now prepared to attack Lambi Bari ridge, an enemy stronghold Luckily RIAF aircraft came over exactly at 0700 hours and softened up the enemy position Meanwhile the two companies were gradually advancing towards the top, supported by fire of two 3-inch mortars and a section of medium machine guns from the flanks After the aircraft had finished their job, artillery put up a concentrated barrage The barrage was lifted and the companies made a spirited charge with their bayonets and drove out the enemy from his well-prepared positions Lambi Bari ridge was captured at 0900 hours C company then advanced to secure the ridge stretching between Lambi Bari and Ramgarh fort The aircraft came again at 1000 hours and strafed and rocketed the fort and the surrounding features Artillery fire was again directed on known enemy positions After the enemy positions had been softened, A company put in an attack on the fort from the left, and captured it at 1120 hours The battalion did not suffer any casualty on this day. It was a fine achievement, especially because the enemy was in considerable strength in this area, estimated at one full brigade. On 10 and 11 November C company went out with 6/8 Gorkha Rifles as a reserve to establish a picquet at Pt 6480 The struggle lasted for 18 hours before the hill was taken Thus after considerable opposition the battalion carried out fully the task assigned to it, and secured the left flank of the two columns attacking Bhimbar Gali The

total casualties suffered by the battalion in this operation were eight—2 killed and 6 wounded

Meanwhile 5 Brigade Group and 19 Brigade Group were engaged in the task of capturing Bhimbar Gali The task of 5 Brigade Group was to capture Pt. 6911 and Pt 6980 with a view to securing the right flank from Pt 6407 to Bhimbar Gali One company 3/9 Gorkha Rifles, one company J and K troops and A company 3 Mahar (less detachment) were under command, and 36 Field Battery and Section 5 Mountain Battery were in support of the brigade The following were available for air support.—

(i) No 10 Squadron RIAF (Tempests)

(ii) No 12 Squadron (Transport) RIAF (Dakotas)

(iii) No 1 AOP (RFT) RIAF (Austers–one plane)

Under cover of air and artillery support the leading companies of 1/4 Gorkha Rifles captured Pt 6911 at 1030 hours on 8 November 4 Madras, who were following closely behind, advanced at 1200 hours to their objective Pt 6980 under cover of artillery barrage and captured it at 1330 hours after slight opposition Thus the 5 Brigade Group carried out easily its task of capturing Pt. 6911 and Pt. 6980, thereby securing the right flank of Bhimbar Gali.

The left flank of Bhimbar Gali was to be secured by 19 Brigade Group Its task was to capture the ridge from Pt 6944 to Pt 6360 45 Field Battery (less troop) was in support of the brigade The same air support was also available

1 (Para) Kumaon started climbing the feature, Pt 6307, after crossing the *Nala* at 2100 hours on 7 November Advance went on smoothly yet slowly on account of very rough country and steep climbing up to Dhori Dhara, where A coy, the leading company, came under heavy fire from enemy automatics and rifles from Mangalvar A company made a spirited charge and secured Mangalvar by 0110 hours on 8 November Enemy offered resistance from four other tactical features But all resistance was overcome and Pt 6307, the objective, secured at 0600 hours on 8 November. The battalion suffered 22 casualties in this operation—2 killed and 20 wounded

2 Rajputana Rifles, less B company, passed through 1 (Para) Kumaon positions at Pt 6307 at 1155 hours on 8 November in order to capture Pt 6274 The advance of C company, leading the attack, was held up by heavy enemy fire Under cover of artillery and 3-inch mortar concentration on Pt 6274, C company attacked and captured the feature at the point of bayonet at 1359 hours D company then swept forward to attack a ring contour which was secured at 1405 hours on 8 November. The enemy continued to snipe and mortar the battalion positions from Pt. 6944 1/2 Punjab, however, soon brought the situation under control by attacking and capturing Pt. 6944 at 1800 hours on 8 November

At 1020 hours on 9 November A company 2 Rajputana Rifles plus

Tactical Headquarters, supported by one detachment mortars, passed through the positions of 1/2 Punjab to attack Pt 6207 In spite of heavy enemy fire, A company made a determined attack and captured Pt. 6207 at 1145 hours

The successful attacks by 5 Bridge Group and 19 Brigade Group compelled the hostiles to pull out of Bhimbar Gali area to Mendhar. The stage was now set for the advance to Mendhar and to Punch

PUNCH FINALLY RELIEVED

Major-General Atma Singh now detailed 19 Brigade Group to capture Pt 5732 with a view to exploiting towards Jhhika Gali, an enemy stronghold barring the way to Mendhar 5 Brigade Group was assigned the task of capturing Pt. 4394 and securing the right flank of the main column up to but excluding Pt 3295

Commander 19 Brigade Group ordered 1/2 Punjab to capture Pt 5732, and 2 Rajputana Rifles (less one company) to exploit up to Sabra Gali Accordingly, 1/2 Punjab advanced to attack at 2100 hours on 13 November and captured Pt 5186 Further advance towards Pt 5732 was checked by fierce opposition 1/2 Punjab was compelled to withdraw by first light on 14 November Although 19 Brigade Group failed to make a headway against enemy opposition, 5 Brigade Group successfully carried out its task of securing the right flank of the main column At 0015 hours on 13 November, C company 5 Rajputana Rifles secured Pt. 4394 without opposition. Meanwhile C and D companies 1/4 Gorkha Rifles were busy attacking Pt. 5073 At 0500 hours on 13 November the feature was secured after slight opposition The extremely heavy opposition encountered by 19 Brigade Group and the slight opposition met by 5 Brigade Group led to a change in the plan It was obvious that the enemy was holding Jhhika Gali and Pt 5732 in strength Gun support to the attacking troops was restricted to six mountain guns The enemy, on the other hand, was believed to have two 25 pounders and eight mountain guns in this sector The road head at that time was at Sarula, and it would take another 10 to 14 days for the construction of the road forward and for the guns to reach Bhimbar Gali It would be easier and less costly to tackle the strongly held features south of Mendhar when more gun support and tanks were available The immediate advance to Punch was, therefore, diverted via Topa instead of Jhhika Gali

Major-General Atma Singh's plan was to capture Topa area with a view to linking up with 101 Brigade from Punch 19 Brigade less one battalion, supported by all available artillery was to commence attack on night 19/20 November 101 Brigade was to start operations on night 19/20 November to capture Pt 6005 and Pt 6876 (Pir Margot Ghazi) It was expected that the link-up with 101 Brigade would take place by the evening of 20 November

While 2 Rajputana Rifles was left to demonstrate towards Pt 5732,

the rest of 19 Brigade was switched secretly to the right and joined up with 5 Brigade, thereby ensuring success of the operation Concentration of 19 Brigade less one battalion started in the morning of 16 November and was completed by the morning of 18 November 1948 5 Brigade less 4 Madras concentrated near Pt 5078 for the capture of Topa As Topa feature was held in strength by enemy, Brigadier Umrao Singh decided to achieve surprise by putting in a two battalion attack a little north of this feature 5 Rajputana Rifles was to capture Pt 5982 and exploit along the ridge towards Topa 1/4 Gorkha Rifles was to secure another hill near Pt 5982 and exploit north-east along the ridge towards Pt 6793 (Danni-na-Pir) where they were to join hands with troops of 101 Brigade from Punch, who were to occupy Pt. 6005 and Pt 6793.

During night 19/20 November, 1/4 Gorkha Rifles and 5 Rajputana Rifles carried out a night march By first light A company 5 Rajputana Rifles, leading the advance, was at the foothill of the objective, Pt. 5982, which was captured by 0730 hours on 20 November without much opposition Meanwhile the leading company of 1/4 Gorkha Rifles had also captured its objective at 0620 hours Then exploitation began One platoon 1/4 Gorkha Rifles was sent to Pt 6793 and met there troops of 101 Brigade at 1200 hours 1/2 Punjab passed through the positions of 5 Rajputana Rifles and captured Topa at 1500 hours on 20 November

The simultaneous attack from the Punch side had been equally successful A column made up of 1 Kashmir Infantry and two coys of 8 Kashmir Infantry under Lt-Col Khajoor Singh, was sent out with the task of capturing Pt 6876, called Pir Margot Ghazi, and then forking left and right, to exploit upto Pt. 6005 and Pt 6793, also called Danni-na-Pir. Starting off at 1930 hrs on 19 November, this column crept up to Pir Margot Ghazi and assaulted it through a rain of mortar bombs and machine gun bullets The enemy, about five companies strong, fled after a bayonet charge by the State troops, leaving behind wireless equipment and considerable ammunition Thereupon, Lt-Col Khajoor Singh's force pushed on to Danni-na-Pir and shook hands there with 1/4 GR of the relieving force The long siege of Punch was over

Now the plan was to capture Pt. 5363, Pt 5136 and Pt 5682 from Topa side. 1/2 Punjab and one company 1 (Para) Kumaon were assigned this task Simultaneously 2 Rajputana Rifles, who were stuck up, had to move forward to secure Pt 5732 and Jhhika Gali On getting the information that the enemy was pulling out of Pt 5732, C company and one platoon from D company 2 Rajputana Rifles swept forward to the attack at 2200 hours on 21 November and captured Pt 5732 at 0245 hours on 22 November. Then B and A companies advanced from Pt 5732 at 2200 hours on 22 November to secure Jhhika Gali and Pt 5669 respectively Jhhika Gali was secured at 0210 hours and Pt 5669 at 0345 hours on 23 November without opposition. Meanwhile 1 (Para) Kumaon less two companies (which had concentrated in Topa area on

22 November) and 1/2 Punjab were converging on features north-west of Jhhika Gali 1 (Para) Kumaon captured Pt 5682 at 0730 hours on 23 November without opposition 1/2 Punjab captured Pt 5363 at 0600 hours on 23 November and then at 1600 hours secured Pt 5136 also Thus on 23 November 1/2 Punjab, 1 (Para) Kumaon and 2 Rajputana Rifles carried out successfully the mopping up tasks assigned to them With effect from 25 November 1948, 1/2 Punjab, 2 Rajputana Rifles, 1 (Para) Kumaon, and 5 Rajputana Rifles concentrated under command 5 Brigade, while 4 Madras went to 19 Brigade and 1/4 Gorkha Rifles to Punch Brigade

The link-up with Punch in November 1948 was a notable performance The enemy ring round Punch was broken and enemy attempts to force the Punch garrison to surrender were finally frustrated The key to the success of this operation was deception In all probability, the operation would have failed if the enemy could divine the Indian intentions to link up with Punch. The hostiles would have been in a position to check the advance, as they had sufficient forces in a country suited for defence By clever moves the enemy was left in considerable doubt as to whether the objective was Punch or Kotli "By demonstrating towards Pir Badesar, Kotli and Pir Kalewa, and by carrying out deceptive air drops, we led the enemy to believe that Kotli was our objective and made him disperse his forces It was only after the operation had been completed that our real intention, which was to link-up with Punch, and not capture Kotli, became known to the enemy "[6]

Notes

1 There is some dispute about the date, but on balance of evidence 23 June appears most likely
2 "Kashmir Operations (Sep 48-Dec 48)" by Lt-General S.M Shrinagesh in *Selected Writings and Speeches from Officers of Western Command on Operations in J & K Immediately prior to the cease-fire*
3 Operation 'Emptee' or 'MT' was derived by reversing the initial letters of Thana Mandi or TM, according to Gen Cariappa
4 "Part played by the R I A in Kashmir Operations" by Brigadier Pritam Singh in *Selected Writings and Speeches from Officers of Western Command on Operations in J&K*
5 Ibid
6 "Kashmir Operations (Sep 48-Dec 48)" by Lt-General S M Shrinagesh in *Selected Writings and Speeches from Officers of Western Command on Operations in J & K*

CHAPTER XIV

Fierce Fights from Chhamb to Tithwal

(August-December 1948)

BITTER DUEL IN TITHWAL SECTOR

Operation 'Easy'—the link-up with Punch—stole the limelight. It was a brilliant achievement. Meanwhile 163 Brigade in Tithwal area and 161 Brigade in Uri area were up against considerable opposition In both these areas enemy 25 pounders, 3 7-inch howitzers and 3-inch mortars were engaged in a gruelling artillery duel with Indian guns and aircraft. On 12 August 1948, the hostiles heavily shelled the Indian positions south of Tithwal Approximately 200 shells were counted within one hour.[1] Hostile medium machine gun fire on the positions in Tithwal and south of it continued throughout the day on 14 August. On the next day, enemy heavily shelled and mortared again the forward positions. On 19 August, 110 mortar bombs landed in the area Next day enemy fired a total of 120 3 7-inch howitzer shells and 90 mortar bombs. On 22 August hostile mortars fired 32 bombs On 29 August enemy fired a total of 63 bombs Thus throughout August the enemy heavily shelled and mortared the forward positions in Tithwal area. In September he brought up a 25-pounder gun to bombard the positions It was on 7 September that for the first time the hostile 25-pounder shelled the line of communication and Brigade Tactical Headquarters, approximately 25 shells being fired Next day the 25-pounder fired a total of 109 shells. The following day it fired 31 shells On 10 September it fired 42 shells. On 12 September a RIAF aircraft attacked the hostile gun position. As it dived to the attack, it was hit by medium machine gun fire, crashed and went up in flames. A rescue party of 1 Madras received a volley of enemy shells, but managed to recover the gallant pilot's body. Heavy shelling and mortaring by the enemy continued throughout September.

Meanwhile Commander 163 Brigade planned to clear the hostiles east of river Kishanganga and destroy all bridges up to the suspension bridge. He detailed 3 Jat for this task. The column engaged in this operation was known as 'The Bikram Column' This column was to move from Tangdhar to Pt 9013 via Baltharian and Khori and establish a firm base there Then it was to establish another firm base at Khel for further operations to the north. After destroying all the bridges which the enemy had built recently over the Kishanganga between Tithwal and the suspension bridge near Salkhala, the column was to return to Tangdhar via Tangdharan Di Gali.

After a reconnaissance patrol had reported that enemy (a platoon

in strength) had pulled out of Khori and Sunjoi, the Bikram Column (i e 3 Jat less two platoons) had left Tangdhar at 1445 hours on 27 September and by night had established a firm base at Pt. 9013. At 0500 hours on 28 September a strong fighting patrol was sent to capture Khel, which was to be the second firm base, and secured this base without opposition Then at 1700 hours on 28 September a platoon with a few sappers left Pt 9013 with the intention of destroying the Pulley bridge, and destroyed it the same night. About 450 metres ahead they came across an ordinary rope bridge which they cut down The establishment of a third firm base ahead of Khel was not possible due to certain logistic difficulties The allotted task could only be completed by sending long penetration patrols. Accordingly, at 0400 hours on 29 September, two strong patrols of one officer and 50 men each, rationed for two days and carrying one blanket per head and with a few selected coolies to carry ammunition, left Sairagali Their task was to clear enemy up to the suspension bridge and also to destroy all bridges in that area. At 1200 hours on 29 September when the leading patrol was moving along the western slope of Khel, it was subjected to heavy fire from three medium machine guns and two light machine guns, which were in position along the west bank of the river. Further advance was impossible due to the nature of the ground. As soon as it got dark the leading patrol moved away towards Rampur and returned by early morning. The withdrawal of these patrols was covered by medium machine guns and mortars. The column withdrew and reached Tangdhar on 1 October.

1 Sikh in Richhmar Gali area had to bear the brunt of enemy attacks One was a particularly vicious attack made in a supreme effort to drive out the Indian troops from this area of vital importance. At 0600 hours on 13 October, two enemy 25 pounders and two 3 7-inch howitzers opened up on the forward position. Under cover of this artillery fire, one enemy battalion attacked this position. The attack was repulsed after a stiff struggle At 0930 hours the enemy brought up six mortars and three medium machine guns also. After softening up this position, another enemy battalion put in an attack, and occupied a forward outpost held by only 4 men. Two of these were wounded, but the other two carried the wounded back to the company position through mines, heavy shelling and machine gunning At 1000 hours, enemy attacked the main company position. It was repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy The hostiles then made another attempt to soften up the company position with the supporting weapons and then put in another attack. This attack was also repulsed, though most of the bunkers were destroyed by the enemy 3.7-inch howitzers which were scoring direct hits RIAF aircraft engaged the enemy positions very effectively all day long Energetic steps were taken to strengthen the forward position, and it was reinforced by the Battalion Recce Group, and two companies of 3 Jat were also sent immediately. These timely reinforcements and the effective artillery support enabled 1 Sikh to weather the

storm The casualties suffered by 1 Sikh were 47—10 killed and 37 wounded

Hostiles, estimated to be one brigade, made another serious effort to dislodge the defenders from this position After mortaring and sniping the position throughout the night of 13/14 October, two enemy companies launched an attack at 0730 hours on 14 October but were driven back with heavy losses Indian aircraft engaged the enemy 25-pounder effectively and rocketed the area There was a temporary lull till 1830 hours, when enemy guns and mortars again opened up for half an hour Luckily no further attacks took place. The stubborn valour of 1 Sikh and the valuable support rendered by artillery and aircraft had saved the situation

It was in this fiercely contested action in area Richhmar Gali in Tithwal sector that L/Nk Karam Singh of 1 Sikh won immortal fame, and was awarded India's highest gallantry award Param Vir Chakra On 13 October 1948, when enemy in considerable strength attacked 1 Sikh positions, L/Nk Karam Singh, MM, was commanding an outpost which was the enemy's first objective. Although the outpost was attacked by vastly superior numbers, Karam Singh carried on the unequal struggle for a long time When ammunition ran low, Karam Singh decided to join the main company position, fully aware of the fact that due to heavy shelling and continuous firing no help could be expected. Although Karam Singh was wounded, he brought back two of his wounded companions with the help of his third mate In this forward company position, which was subjected to fierce shelling and enemy onslaughts, Karam Singh was again conspicuous by his gallantry. Though twice wounded he refused to be evacuated and continued fighting and holding the first line trenches The fifth enemy attack was very severe, two hostiles came so close to Karam Singh's position that he could not engage them with fire without hitting one of his men He jumped out of his trench, and before any one could realise what had happened, he had bayonetted these two attackers and was back into the trench The strange spectacle of a black bearded and blood soaked giant jumping out of the trench and bayonetting the attackers had a weird effect on the enemy. There were no further attacks

After repelling fierce enemy attacks, 163 Brigade consolidated its positions. Then in the second week of November 1948 an operation was undertaken to capture Pt 9013—an enemy stronghold. A column known as Bachi Column, consisting of 2 platoons of 3 Jat and 2 platoons of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles, set out at 1100 hours on 7 November to clear enemy from Pt 9013 The column established a firm base during the night of 7/8 November While trying to clear Sairagali the patrol was fired upon from Pt. 9013. As the enemy had reinforced this position by medium machine guns and 3-inch mortars, the attack had to be given up and the column returned at 1600 hours on 8 November

The task of liquidating enemy opposition in area Pt 9013 was then

entrusted to Bhisham Column consisting of C and A companies (less one platoon) 3 Jat and one platoon 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles with a detachment of medium machine gun and 3-inch mortars. The column marched off from Tangdhar at 0700 hours on 12 November. At 1500 hours the advance guard was heavily fired upon by the enemy, estimated to be one platoon. An attack was launched and the enemy fled in wild confusion towards Sairagali. The advance guard consolidated the position thus secured The rest of the column reached this position at 1600 hours. At 1800 hours one platoon C company moved forward and occupied a ring contour, and at 0145 hours on 13 November the attacking force, consisting of two platoons A company and one platoon C company, advanced towards Sairagali Their advance was slowed down due to bad terrain and it was not till 0600 hours that they reached Sairagali The enemy, who had his outpost at this place, subjected the attacking force to medium machine gun, Browning and 2-inch mortar fire. All efforts to advance met with failure due to the enemy's fire superiority. The Indian mortar and artillery fire directed at Pt 9013 failed to dislodge them from the strongly entrenched position. The enemy, estimated to be four platoons, had the advantage of covering with fire the only approach to their position Efforts were made to neutralise some of the enemy positions in the vicinity, but due to the difficult terrain they were not successful. Pt. 9013 indeed proved a hard nut to crack. The column returned without having achieved its object.

SHELLING OF URI AREA

Not only 163 Brigade in Tithwal area but 161 Brigade in Uri area also was up against considerable opposition. During the month of August, 161 Brigade confined its activities to patrolling and consolidation of existing positions. Early in September, however, the brigade had to face heavy enemy shelling. During the night of 1/2 September enemy brought up a medium gun to the Chakothi area The gun opened up on Uri at 1405 hours on 2 September. At the same time, enemy 25 pounders opened up to harass the Observation Posts. Enemy fired 126 shells between 1405 and 1730 hours. Out of the total shells fired, 60 shells landed near the Brigade Headquarters, which was situated in the Rest House The Rest House was slightly damaged, all its doors and windows having been smashed Brigade Signal exchange got a direct hit Signal Havildar was killed and all the lines were cut Total Indian casualties from shelling were 6 Other Ranks killed, 21 Other Ranks wounded, 4 mules killed and 4 wounded. Five vehicles were damaged On 4 September hostile artillery was again active; enemy 25 pounders and 3 7-inch howitzers fired 21 shells

The Indian aircraft not only engaged the hostile medium gun with rockets on 2 September, but also strafed and bombed enemy gun positions in Chakothi area on 4 September Wg Cdr Moolgavkar, who directed and led effective air attacks in this area as well as Domel and

Sadabad sectors under very difficult conditions, was awarded Maha Vir Chakra for conspicuous gallantry

At 0230 hours on 6 September three enemy companies attacked the Sawai Man Guards position at Ledi Gali The attack was supported by 3 7-inch howitzers, 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns, but was repulsed In this engagement, which lasted till 0545 hours, enemy 3.7-inch howitzers fired 70 shells while 3-inch mortars fired 110 bombs

On 8 September, enemy heavily shelled 4 Kumaon position at Urusa with 25-pounder guns Indian 25 pounders engaged hostile guns and knocked out one of them

After 8 September, the fury of enemy shelling abated considerably and 161 Brigade settled down to its normal routine of patrolling Early in October, however, enemy artillery became active again On 3 October, enemy shelled the forward positions of 2 Dogra, 4 Kumaon, 2/3 Gorkha Rifles and Sawai Man Guards with 3 7-inch howitzers from Pandu and Chakothi respectively RIAF aircraft strafed, rocketed and bombed Pandu very effectively One of these aircraft developed engine trouble and caught fire The pilot bailed out safely Next day the hostiles shelled 4 Kumaon's forward position with 3 7-inch howitzers from Chakothi for four hours On 6 October enemy 25 pounders shelled 4 Kumaon's forward position for two hours Altogether 64 shells landed in the area of the forward position

On 6/7 October, Commander 161 Brigade decided to carry out an operation to clear area around Sank with a view to capturing Pt 9591 While 7 Sikh were getting ready to carry out this operation, enemy artillery heavily shelled 4 Kumaon's forward position between 1530 hours and 1730 hours on 6 October. During night 6/7 October two companies 7 Sikh and one platoon 2/3 Gorkha Rifles advanced from Subhash picquet One platoon 2/3 Gorkha Rifles secured Twin Contours at 0310 hours on 7 October while two companies 7 Sikh were established at another hill at 0645 hours On 8 October a fighting patrol of four platoons of 7 Sikh advanced to attack Pt 9591 On approach of the troops, the hostiles withdrew from their forward position at Sank The platoon, however, caught them while retreating and inflicted heavy casualties Further advance towards Pt 9591 was not possible, as three enemy companies, supported by 3-inch mortars, were well entrenched on this feature The patrol, therefore, withdrew under artillery cover at 1330 hours on 8 October

On 11 October 2 Dogra in area Kamalkot sent out a patrol of two platoons to Pt 9813 and contacted two enemy companies in position on the ridge It was estimated that enemy fired 3000 rounds of small arms and 80 shells in the short sharp engagement Under cover of this fire, enemy attempted two bayonet charges also, but they were beaten back with losses

On 13 October enemy believed to be 3000 strong concentrated in area Khara with the obvious intention of attacking Mahura But the

effectiveness of the Indian artillery unnerved them and the attack was not launched On the next day 300 hostiles made an attempt to attack A and C companies of 7 Sikh but were driven back by small arms, 3-inch mortars and artillery

As 161 Brigade had many units under its command, it was decided to reorganise the force in Uri sector This reorganisation was completed by 20 October 1948. Henceforth 161 Brigade consisted only of six battalions—7 Sikh, 2 Dogra, 1 Royal Garhwal Rifles, 4 Kumaon, 2/3 Gorkha Rifles and Sawai Man Guards Main Headquarters of this brigade was established at Mahura The rest of the battalions—2 (Para) Madras, 2 Bihar, 5/11 Gorkha Rifles, 1 J & K Militia and 3 J and K Militia were placed under command 165 Brigade with Headquaters at Uri. After this reorganisation of the two brigades, there were no offensive operations due to wintry conditions On 20 October it snowed about 25 cm on Chhota Kazinag, Chinal Dori and Pir Kanthi The severity of winter in other areas of Uri and Mahura sectors curtailed offensive operations

OPERATIONS BY PUNCH BRIGADE

It would be appropriate to give here a brief description of the operations in Punch area, for while Rajauri became the base of operations for the link-up with Punch, the troops in Punch too carried out aggressive patrolling and undertook minor operations to clear enemy pockets of resistance.

It was on 27 August that one of the most spirited engagements took place between the rival forces in Punch. At 0330 hours that day, an enemy battalion made a determined attack on picquet No 8 held by 73 men of B company 11 J and K Militia and 60 men of 1 Kashmir Infantry The attack was made under the covering fire of modern weapons, including 3.7-inch howitzers, mortars and 6 pounders A 6-pounder gun was brought to a feature only 270 metres from the picquet, 400 shells hit the picquet area, destroying the walls of the bunkers Many men were injured. Eventually the attack was beaten off at 0830 hours. The hostiles, however, continued to shell the picquet, and at 1330 hours three enemy companies again attacked it The attackers came within fifty metres of the picquet and got entangled in the minefield Those who crossed the minefield launched an attack, but were driven away by the men of the picquet During the fierce engagement enemy made a lavish use of 2-inch mortar flares, converting the night into day

In order to reduce the pressure on the picquet, 3/9 Gorkha Rifles less one company and one company 8 Kashmir Infantry set out from the lines at 1730 hours. C company 3/9 Gorkha Rifles led the advance This relieving force arrived at picquet No. 7—the assembly area—at 1830 hours and rested there till 2000 hours When it grew dark the force moved forward and reached the picquet No. 8 at 2315 hours. From here the force crept forward in order to attack the enemy from a quarter which he least expected. The troops marched through wooded country

Enemy was completely taken by surprise when at 0530 hours on 28 August the two forward companies launched a fierce attack, and after a short struggle he was driven away But the hostiles soon recovered from the surprise attack, and subjected the attacking force to the fire of light and medium machine guns At 0800 hours on 29 August they heavily shelled the area occupied by the forward troops An enemy attempt to launch a counter-offensive was frustrated by medium machine gun and artillery fire. Enemy was, however, not willing to acknowledge defeat, and at 1400 hours fired a hundred 3-inch mortar bombs within a period of forty minutes, causing 21 casualties—6 killed and 15 wounded The attacking force withdrew to picquet No 8 at midnight 29/30 August. This fierce action in which a handful of men withstood the determined attack of an enemy battalion to capture picquet No 8 redounds to their credit.

About mid October, an operation code named 'Catch' was undertaken to capture Pt 7416 and to clear the enemy from Kasba village. The operation started at 1900 hours on 18 October 1948 and was carried out by three columns—their axis of advance being through Bagial *Nala*. The first column, consisting of one company 9 Kashmir Infantry and one company 11 J and K Militia, captured the high ground by 0200 hours on 19 October after a sharp and swift engagement The second column, consisting of 1 Kashmir Infantry less two companies and two companies 8 J and K Militia, captured Pt 7702 by 0300 hours on 19 October. The third column, consisting of 8 Kashmir Infantry less one company and one company 11 J and K Militia, captured Pt 7416 These objectives were secured after stiff resistance Enemy reinforcements, however, arrived within a day or two and on 21 October they began to exert pressure on the forward Indian positions At 0900 hours on 21 October, the hostiles estimated to be two battalions made a three pronged attack on the forward position at Pt 7702 This position was held by one company 1 Kashmir Infantry and one company 8 J and K Militia The position was reinforced by a platoon, and the attack was repulsed after a prolonged struggle at 1300 hours The artillery played an important part in disorganising enemy ranks and thus weakening the attack At 1705 hours on 23 October one enemy battalion attacked another outpost, held by only one platoon But luckily two more platoons were sent as reinforcement Again it was mainly due to the artillery that the fierce attack was beaten back On 25 October a fighting column of two platoons 11 J and K Militia was sent towards Kasba. After a fierce engagement lasting for three hours, the enemy was driven away. Having accomplished their task the troops withdrew, leaving a permanent picquet at Pt 7416

On 19 November 1948 an operation (code named 'Right Hook') was undertaken to capture Pir Margot Ghazi, Danni na Pir and the western shoulder of Khanetar Gali The object of this operation was to enable the Punch garrison to link-up with the relief column from

Rajauri Only Pir Margot Ghazi, 1830 metres high hill feature, stood between the besieged Punch garrison and the relief column from Rajauri

The first phase of the operation began at 1930 hours on 19 November when a column consisting of 8 J and K Militia and 1 J and K Infantry less one company advanced from starting line It captured Pir Margot Ghazi after stiff opposition at 0100 hours on 20 November Then began the second phase of the operation when a column of 8 J and K Militia less two companies and one company 1 J and K Infantry advanced to capture Danni na Pir The objective was occupied and consolidated at 0330 hours on 20 November after slight resistance One company 1 J and K Infantry was left to occupy Danni na Pir while two companies of 8 J and K Militia advanced further to capture the western shoulder of Khanetar Gali When the leading troops came within 135 metres of the objective, enemy opened up automatic fire, but the troops made a spirited attack and drove out the enemy Thus operation 'Right Hook' was successfully carried out, the objectives were secured without encountering stiff opposition, and the column from Punch was able to effect a junction with the relief column from Rajauri

On 25 November 1948 another minor operation code named 'Salotri' was undertaken to capture Pt 5024 The object of this operation was to remove the enemy threat to Punch, for enemy still had the town of Punch within range of his artillery 8 Kashmir Infantry carried out the preliminary operation by capturing a ridge at 0130 hours on 25 November 1948 Then A and B companies 11 J and K Militia advanced to capture Pt 5024 Enemy offered stiff resistance with his automatics and hand grenades B company, however, captured Pt 5024 at 0430 hours and started consolidating its position Meanwhile the hostiles, who had withdrawn to the next ridge, threw rifle bombs and shelled the two forward positions Their attempt to launch a counter-attack was frustrated by the excellent fire support from the mountain guns At 0930 hours on 25 November B company 11 J and K Militia, followed by one company 8 Kashmir Infantry, attacked the ridge held by them After stiff resistance the ridge was captured at 1030 hours Positions at Pt 5024 and the ridge were handed over to 8 Kashmir Infantry at 1600 hours on 26 November, and the attacking force withdrew to the base, having accomplished the task assigned to it The capture of Salotri ridge removed the threat to Punch, for it exposed the enemy gun positions and the hostiles were compelled to pull the guns out

On 13 December, an operation was undertaken to capture Thanpir and Pt 7030 1/4 Gorkha Rifles and 1 Kashmir Infantry were assigned this task The force moved out of Punch at 1800 hours, 1 Kashmir Infantry leading the advance 1 Kashmir Infantry captured Thanpir without much opposition at 0230 hours on 14 December Then 1/4 Gorkha Rifles swept forward for the attack on Pt 7030 At 0300 hours

C company, leading the advance, came under heavy fire from a feature dominating the route of advance It was a bright moonlit night and the ground was covered with snow It was, therefore, difficult for the company to manoeuvre to the right or left of the track without being observed by the enemy, who was hardly 90 metres from the forward platoon, and was supported by medium machine guns The Gorkhas, however, faced the problem boldly While B company moved from the right of the hill, C company swept through the left flank of the enemy Both the companies advanced in face of heavy fire But nothing could stop the Gorkhas from climbing up the hill and securing the feature by 0415 hours The enemy fled, pursued by A company. Hardly had A company covered about a km when the enemy rallied on a dominating feature wherefrom he could observe the line of approach Supported by 25 pounders, A company and one platoon from C company boldly attacked and captured the feature within 20 minutes Unnerved by the impetuosity of the attack, the hostiles fled in wild confusion Pt 7030, the final objective, was captured at 1000 hours without much difficulty

On 15/16 December, B company 11 J and K Militia moved to Mandi on a long range patrol via Pt 7030, Nurpur and Dhangri. On its way the company cleared the hostiles from the area and resettled local Muslims At 1600 hours on 16 December, the company set up its headquarters at Mandi Thus the Punch garrison freed the Suran and Mandi valleys astride the tracks leading into Kashmir across the Pir Panjal range

OPERATIONS IN JHANGAR SECTOR

As regards Naushahra-Jhangar area, it may be stated that whereas Naushahra for a while enjoyed respite from enemy attacks after the fierce enemy shelling of the area in July 1948, Jhangar continued to be subjected to frequent enemy shelling Enemy shelled Jhangar Camp for two hours on 3 September 1948, firing 50 shells One of the Indian 25 pounders was damaged, and 7 casualties were suffered by the garrison On the next day, enemy shelled Jhangar Camp again Fifteen 25-pounder shells landed in Jhangar Camp, but fortunately no casualties were sustained On 7 October the hostiles shelled No 10 picquet and No 13 picquet with 25 pounders No 10 picquet did not suffer any damage The barbed wire of No 13 picquet, however, was blown off at one place, where one of the shells had landed

After securing Pir Badesar, 268 Brigade consolidated its positions and then on 7 November 1948 carried out operation 'Button' for clearing enemy from Pt 3782 Enemy was holding Tain and Tain Ridge, and had put medium machine guns in bunkers on the forward slopes of Pt 3782 His guns could reach up to Giran On 5 November, therefore, Commander 268 Brigade ordered 2 Rajput to capture Pt 3782 and features north-west of it The operation started at 0430 hours on 7 November The Rajputs secured their immediate objectives against

opposition Then thrice, at 0920, 1105 and 1130 hours, enemy tried to advance from Pind Pail under cover of 3-inch mortar fire to drive out the Indian troops from the features they had secured The attacks were repulsed with heavy losses to the hostiles, 37 of them being killed They, however, continued to shell furiously the forward positions Enemy 25 pounders fired 100 shells and 3-inch mortars fired 200 bombs In face of this murderous fire it was futile to move forward to secure Pt 3782 Therefore, at 1800 hours the Indian troops pulled out of the forward positions 2 Rajput was not strong enough to dislodge the enemy from his stronghold on Pt 3782 The operation was, however, merely a diversion undertaken in Jhangar sector to screen the main advance of the column to Punch

On 21 November 1948, operation 'Cobra' to secure Pt 4810, about 1800 metres north of Pir Badesar, was carried out. Commander 268 Brigade ordered 2 Jat to carry out this operation A company, leading the attack, captured Pt 4810 at 0515 hours on 21 November without any opposition C company captured its objective at 0615 hours and exploited up to village Mithi Dhara without meeting any opposition This operation also was a part of the role of 268 Brigade to 'demonstrate' so as to distract enemy attention from the main operation 'Easy'—link-up with Punch

Naushahra area, which had had respite from enemy attacks, was exposed to the full fury of enemy shelling in the middle of December Hell seemed to have got loose when on 14 December enemy turned all available guns of two regiments on the Naushahra area 5 5-inch medium guns, 25 pounders, 3 7-inch heavy ack-ack guns and 75 mms from medium tanks pounded mercilessly the Naushahra area. Between 1100 hours and 2000 hours that day, enemy fired 2,000 shells into an area with a radius of 11 km At the farthest point they picked on targets at Beri Pattan, 16 km south-east of Naushahra Their targets included Beri Pattan, Seri, Naushahra, Punjab Hill, Nothi Dhar, Kaman Gosha, Grund Gala and the much-shelled Chhawa ridge The shelling continued through the night with varying intensity and was resumed next morning On 16 December enemy shelled the Tactical Headquarters accurately and heavily. Altogether, enemy fired well over 5,000 shells in this bombardment The defenders simply stayed put and held on

OPERATIONS IN CHHAMB AREA

80 Brigade guarding Akhnur-Chhamb-Beri Pattan area engaged in minor operations to clear enemy pockets of resistance One such operation was called 'Pahli and Dusri Vijaya'. It was undertaken early in September 1948 in Chhamb sector to clear area Purani Gakhri, which was suspected to be held by two enemy companies 4 Rajput, with 2 companies 1/9 Gorkha Rifles and 4 sections 12 Battalion J and K Militia under command, were assigned this task The force marched during night 8/9 September and arrived in Purani Gakhri area at 0500 hours on

9 September. C company 4 Rajput and one platoon J and K Militia leading the attack cleared the area of high hills Only slight opposition was encountered. But by midday enemy had been reinforced and managed to infiltrate on two sides of the company through hilly country After a fierce struggle the company pulled out of the forward position with the support of artillery Some men were found missing, including the company commander, 3 Junior Commissioned Officers and 11 Other Ranks It was decided that another operation (called 'Dusri Vijaya') must be carried out in order to recover the missing, wounded and dead The next morning the weather was foul, but the operation was successful for the missing and wounded officers and men were brought back safely while the dead bodies were cremated Thus ended 'Dusri Vijaya'

Early in November 1948, Chhamb area was subjected to heavy enemy shelling At 1645 hours on 4 November enemy 25 pounders started shelling Chhamb Camp area. Six to eight shells landed at a time, after intervals of two to three minutes Indian artillery could not immediately engage the enemy guns, as their exact location was not known Heavy shelling went on until 2030 hours During those four hours enemy fired 100 shells in the camp area and 200 on the outlying villages After the shelling ceased, enemy engaged the Indian picquet with light machine guns and rifles from long range, firing about 6,000 rounds of small arms ammunition At the same time, the J and K Militia posts were shelled from Munawwar Shelling in this area was followed by an attack by two companies, supported by 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns This attack developed at 2330 hours but was beaten back At 0630 hours on 5 November, RIAF aircraft tried to locate and engage the enemy gun position. But they failed to do so as the hostiles had obviously withdrawn the guns into Pakistan—Munawwar and Koel being quite near the border of J and K State with Pakistan

After heavily shelling the Chhamb area, enemy turned his attention to Beri Pattan On 14 December 1948, 2 J and K Rifles, guarding Beri Pattan were subjected to heavy shelling Shelling started at 1515 hours from the direction of Kabutargala, and 500 shells landed in Beri Pattan area on 15 December Considerable damage was caused, for the petrol, oil and lubricants dump at Beri Pattan caught fire and exploded 2 J and K Rifles' ammunition dump The Commander 80 Brigade visited Beri Pattan and helped to restore morale by sending reinforcements One company 7/2 Punjab came up to strengthen 2 J and K Rifles Heavy enemy shelling continued on 16 December. Two iron ropes of the bridge were broken due to hostile shelling As the bridge was rendered incapable of bearing the weight of vehicles, convoys carrying supplies and ammunition for the forward troops tried to cross the river by a diversion In spite of heavy shelling during night 16/17 December, 15 trucks and 3 jeeps managed to cross the river safely The intensity of

controlled a large part of the vital canal system in the West Punjab In a crisis, Pakistan could rush reinforcements to the Jhangar-Mirpur front from her main bases nearby, while the Indian bases were far far away The requisite force build-up and the logistic problems made it impossible in any case to mount a major offensive till the next spring or early summer Cease-Fire came much before that The Mirpur-Mazaffarabad areas, therefore, continued to remain in the illegal occupation of Pakistan

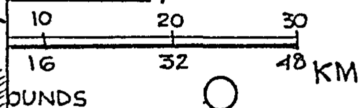
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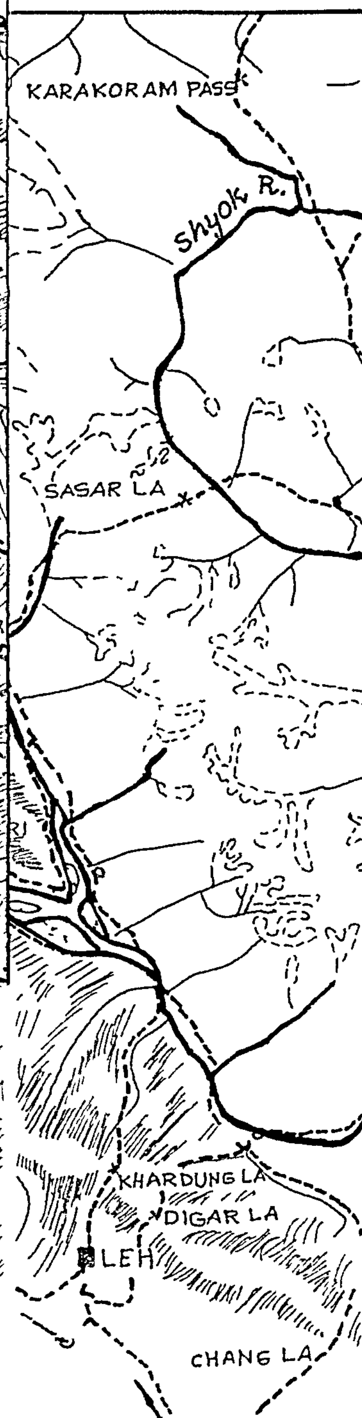
1 The Uri garrison also received heavy enemy shelling On 23 September 1948, for example, 300 shells were fired in two and a half hours, causing 17 casualties Fortunately, Brig Henderson Brooks had had the 161 Bde HQ and Uri garrison go underground in dug-in shelters, otherwise the casualties in that crowded area would have been much worse

PART III

THE NORTHERN FRONT

R CAMPAIGN
HERN FRONT
7-1948





CHAPTER XV

Enemy Successes in the North

(November 1947—August 1948)

TOPOGRAPHY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Northern Front of the Kashmir campaign included the sectors of Gurais, Skardu, Dras and Kargil, and Leh It will be convenient to describe the operations sector by sector, although fighting was usually in progress all along the line simultaneously

The major mountain systems of the area have already been mentioned In general, the middle and western portions of the area were, compared to the eastern portion or Ladakh proper, of a moderate altitude The Indus gorge near Kargil was about 2440 metres, while at Bunji the river flowed only at an altitude of about 1220 metres The valley of the Indus in this area was flanked by the Karakoram Range immediately to its north and by the Himalayan Range some distance away to the south, with the intervening area occupied by the plateau-like Deosai Plains, with its large table-land over 4270 metres high Due to the low river valleys and very high mountain tops, the gradient was generally steep and the land exceedingly rugged and broken, cut up by deep and narrow gorges

The main towns and villages in the area were Gilgit, Skardu, Kargil and Dras Gilgit was the headquarters of the Governor appointed by the Maharaja; the other towns were small administrative centres All were important points in the communications system of the area As already mentioned, the natural outlet of the region lay towards the south-west along the valley of the Indus The comparatively low mountains between Gilgit-Chilas and the North West Frontier Province were also crossed by several tracks, leading over easy passes open almost throughout the year. Gilgit also commanded one of the two main caravan routes from Srinagar, via Gurais, the Burzil Pass (or Kamri Pass) and the Mintaka Pass to Kashgar An equally important route led eastwards along the Indus to Skardu and Kargil, and onwards to Leh Kargil was also linked directly to Srinagar via Dras and the Zoji La [1]

Apart from these trunk routes, there were several tracks in the area of great military importance. From near the Burzil Pass, a good track led northwards over the Deosai Plains (4270 metres) to Skardu on the Indus Other tracks from the same area led eastwards along the Shingo or the Shigar streams to Dras and Kargil There was a third route eastwards from Gurais to Dras via the Tilel valley and the Muski *Nala* Westwards from Kargil, the main route to Skardu went along the Suru and the Indus and passed through the villages of Bagicha, Tolti, Parkutta and Gol From Gol, which lay just downstream from the

junction of the Shyok and the Indus, a track also led east along the Shyok caravan route between Leh and Yarkand

It is clear, therefore, that the area between Gilgit, Kargil, Zoji La and Gurais offered many advantages to an aggressor possessing initiative From a base-line running from Gilgit to Gurais, the attackers could strategically outflank the defenders of Skardu from the south, and cut off their supply line The main line of communication from Srinagar to Kargil ran parallel to the front-line, and could be cut at several points by an enterprising enemy.

THE FALL OF GILGIT

As has been described earlier, the entire north-west of the Indian sub-continent was, in the autumn of 1947, aflame with communal riots In October 1947, the disturbances spread to the State of Jammu and Kashmir also The Gilgit area of the State had an overwhelmingly Muslim population, made up of turbulent hill-men The position was complicated by the existence of the semi-feudal principalities of Chitral, Hunza, Nagar, etc., which had been brought under Dogra rule in the 19th Century

In July 1947, Gilgit was still being administered by the Government of India, to whom it had been made over by the State government on lease for 60 years The departure of the British from India being imminent, it was decided to terminate this lease and hand Gilgit back to the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir Late in July 1947, the State government appointed Brig Ghansar Singh, one of the most senior officers of the State's Force, to be the Governor of Gilgit He flew to Gilgit on 30 July 1947 and took over the administration from Lt-Col Bacon, the British Political Agent, on 1 August 1947

The local people, even though overwhelmingly Muslim, joyously welcomed the return of the Maharaja's administration after the period of British rule Of the subordinate chiefs under the Governor of Gilgit, namely, the Mir of Hunza, the Mir of Nagar, the Raja of Punial, and the chieftains of Koh Ghizar, Yasin and Ashkoman, only the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar were hostile Their hostility proved very damaging, for three-fourths of the men of the Gilgit Scouts came from Hunza and Nagar, and Subedar-Major Babar Khan of the Scouts was the uncle of the Mir of Nagar and had married the sister of the Mir of Hunza The two British officers of the Gilgit Scouts whose services had been retained by the State, namely, Major W A Brown and Captain Matheson, proved themselves inveterately hostile to Jammu & Kashmir State, and took the leading part in the pro-Pakistan treachery at Gilgit The predominantly Muslim civil employees of the government of Gilgit were also pro-Pakistan, and they backed the demands of the Scouts for special rates of pay and other concessions for serving the Jammu & Kashmir State soon after Brig Ghansar Singh took over charge It should be noted, however, that the Gilgit Scouts and the local people

were still free from the violent communal passions then sweeping through the Punjab, and did not favour killing or converting by force the non-Muslims at Gilgit

Not so the State's own Muslim troops Gilgit area was garrisoned by 6 J & K Infantry, less about two companies, with headquarters at Bunji, about 54 km from Gilgit on the road to Srinagar Commanded by Lt-Col Abdul Majid Khan, the battalion was composed of Muslims and Sikhs in almost equal proportions The Sikhs, according to the Commanding Officer, were raw recruits and were not fit for active duty for the next 5-6 months, till they had fired their musketry course The Muslim companies had men from Punch and they, having heard all about the horrible communal killings in the Punjab, were in a violently communal frame of mind

Brigadier Ghansar Singh soon realised the dangerous situation at Gilgit, but faced his task with a true soldier's courage and devotion He had initially some success too, and the position appeared stabilised in September and October But his urgent requests to Srinagar brought no help. Perhaps his messages did not even get through to Srinagar, for the telegraph office at Gilgit was under a Muslim officer, and the wireless station belonged to the British Government and was controlled by Peshawar radio station It was to be purchased by the Jammu & Kashmir State, but the transfer was never effected To add to all these troubles, Brig Ghansar Singh had no power to operate the budget, no powers of a District Magistrate, and no stock of the controlled articles like cloth, sugar or kerosene oil with which he could buy public favour

What followed was practically inevitable. Wild rumours raged in Gilgit in the last week of October when the tribal invasion of Kashmir began The common people remained friendly, but there was clear evidence that Major Brown and Sub-Major Babar Khan of the Scouts were planning some trouble Some locals advised the Governor to call up 6 J & K Infantry from Bunji, but Brig Ghansar Singh realised that State Force's Muslim men were as disaffected as, and more violent than, the Scouts The Sikhs of 6 J & K Infantry could not be called due to the opposition of Lt-Col Abdul Majid Khan, the Commanding Officer

At about mid-night between 31 October-1 November 1947, about 100 men of the Gilgit Scouts, led by Major Brown, Lieut Haidar Khan and Sub-Major Babar Khan, surrounded the Governor's house and tried to steal in to capture him in sleep. He woke up, however, and started using his revolver, backed up by his orderly and driver who were handed a double-barrel shotgun and a sporting rifle The Scouts then opened machine gun fire on the house. Exchange of fire went on for several hours, and two men of the Gilgit Scouts were killed Morning came, and with it a message from Major Brown asking Brigadier Ghansar Singh to surrender or else all non-Muslims in Gilgit would be killed The Governor surrendered and was put under arrest The local people protested against this, and villagers from the surrounding area

began to gather in Gilgit The Scouts' leaders managed to pacify them and sent them away, but probably this demonstration of the people's affection saved the Governor and the other non-Muslims from being murdered in cold blood Lt-Col Abdul Majid Khan, the CO of 6 J & K Infantry, was also imprisoned by the Gilgit Scouts and their British officers

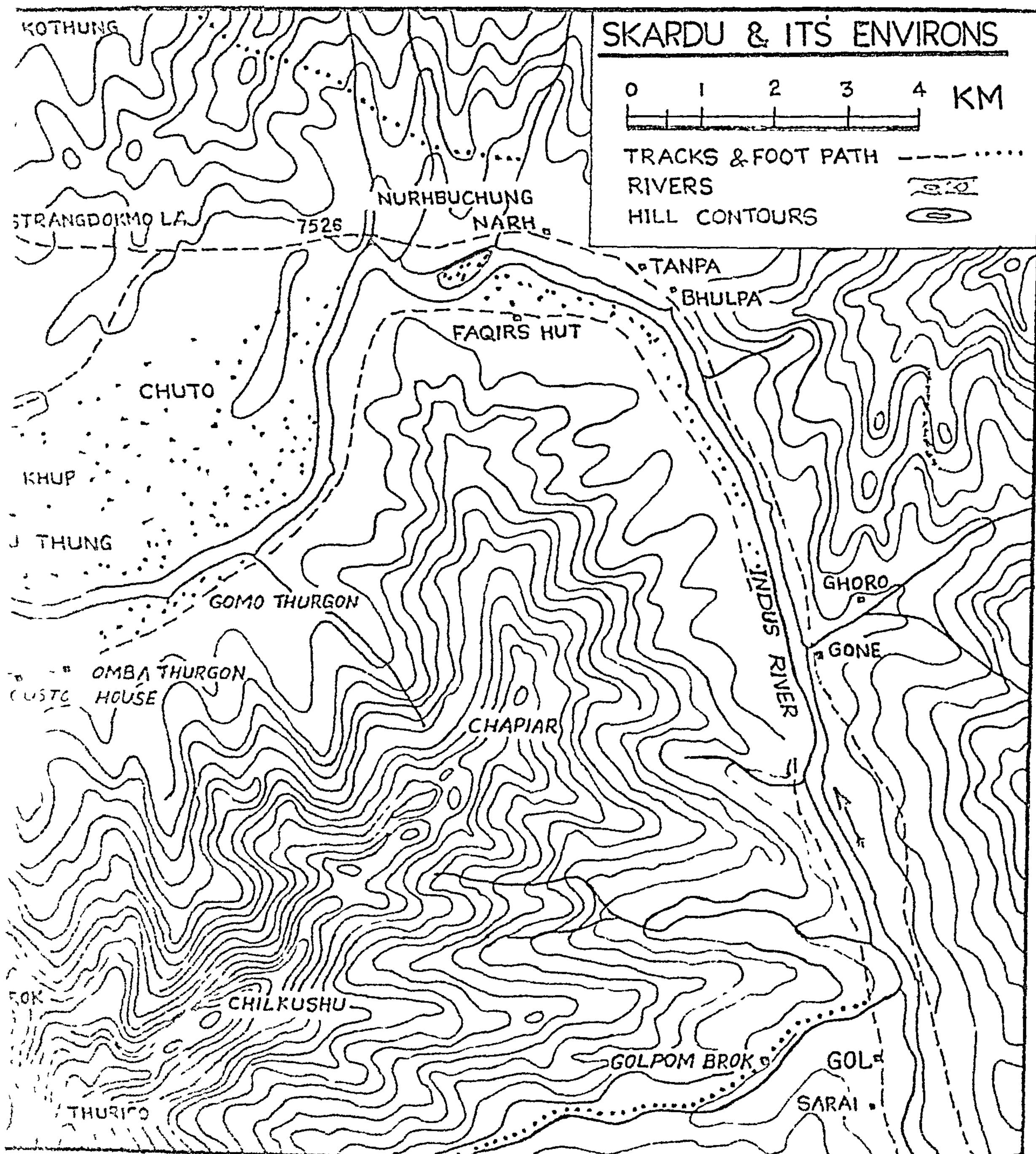
Immediately after this, steps were taken by the conspirators to annihilate the Sikh troops at Bunji. A Sikh post at Janglot was treacherously attacked at night by Muslim troops of 6 J & K Infantry and the Gilgit Scouts, and the entire garrison was killed, except for a lone survivor who managed to cross the icy Indus river on a log of wood On hearing the news from Gilgit and Janglot, the Sikh company at Bunji dispersed, and the men tried to find their way out to Gurais via Astor But the Scouts from Chilas, under the personal command of Captain Matheson, were already guarding that route and prevented all escape The Sikhs wandered through the high, snow-covered mountains for days without food, and were captured one by one

The entire Gilgit region thus passed into the hands of Pakistan early in November 1947 At first a Provisional Government was formed, of which the leaders were Major Brown, Captain Hassan, Captain Ehsan Ali, Captain Muhammad Khan, Captain Sayeed, Lieut Haidar and Sub-Major Babar Khan. It is notable that none of the local Rajas nor any member of the public was included in the Provisional Government. On 3 November 1947, Major Brown held a flag hoisting ceremony at Gilgit in the Scout Lines After about a fortnight, one Sardar Mohammad Alam, a Pathan and obviously a nominee of Pakistan, came from Peshawar and took over the administration as Political Agent at Gilgit No 'Azad Government' was established there, even in name But the control of Gilgit area enabled Pakistan to operate towards Gurais as well as to attack Skardu

THAPA REACHES SKARDU

Skardu was only the headquarters of a Tehsil in the district of Ladakh. But, due to the bitter cold at Leh, the District Officer used to spend every winter at Skardu instead of Leh It also gave him the opportunity of attending personally to the affairs of the Tehsil, which was truly of a Himalayan size It included the Jagirs of five Rajas, namely, Rondhu, Khaplu, Shigar, Kharmang and Skardu These Rajas had held their territories since before the Dogra rule over Kashmir, and still commanded great influence over their peasantry The people of these Jagirs, as of Skardu town itself, were almost entirely Muslims Steeped in ignorance and narrow prejudices, they fell an easy prey to the cry of 'Jehad' and gave to the raiders every help they could

At the time of the fall of Gilgit, the State Forces in the entire region from Leh to Bunji consisted of 6 Jammu & Kashmir Infantry alone The battalion was composed of Sikhs and Muslims in roughly equal



SKARDU & ITS ENVIRONS
0 1 2 3 4 KM
TRACKS & FOOT PATH
RIVERS
HILL CONTOURS
KOTHUNG
STRANGDOKMO LA
7526
NURHBUCHUNG
NARH
TANPA
BHULPA
FAQIRS HUT
CHUTO
KHUP
THUNG
GOMO THURGON
OMBA THURGON
HOUSE
CHAPIAR
INDUS RIVER
GHORO
GONE
CHILKUSHU
GOLPOM BROK
GOL
SARAI

numbers After the treachery at Gilgit and the imprisonment of Lt-Col Abdul Majid Khan, the command of 6 J & K Infantry devolved upon Major Sher Jung Thapa, with the local rank of Lieut-Colonel The troops were distributed in small numbers from Leh to Bunji. Leh was held by a company of Sikhs, less one platoon, directly under the command of Lieut-Colonel Thapa. There was a mobile column at Kargil, made up of two platoons of Sikhs under Captain Ganga Singh and possessing the only wireless telegraphy set available to the battalion Two platoons of Muslims under Captain Nek Alam held Skardu. The remainder of the battalion was at Bunji, and was lost to Thapa when that area passed under the raiders' control

Rumours of the loss of Gilgit reached Srinagar within a few days of the event. The Maharaja's government was then completely occupied with the defence of Srinagar itself, and the mountain passes were already closed for the winter The only troops which could quickly be made available for operations in that theatre were those under Lt-Col Thapa. On 21 November 1947, therefore, Thapa was ordered to "move to Skardu with as many troops as could be spared from Leh and Kargil " He left Leh on 23 November. Collecting some men and the wireless telegraphy set from Kargil, Thapa moved on towards Skardu Everything was peaceful But, on 2 December, when the party was going from Parkutta to Gol, a Harvard aircraft came over, circled, and then flew away towards Gilgit Thapa continued on his way, though the incident left an uneasy feeling in the minds of all his men The next day he reached Skardu with his small force of 2 Indian Commissioned Officers, 2 JCOs and 75 men, including 3 Muslims who operated the W/T set

At Skardu, Lieut-Colonel Thapa found the position far from satisfactory. The people appeared furtive and sullen A few days earlier, the District Officer, Wazir Amar Nath, had held a conference of the local Rajas to gauge the political climate and to ask them what rations etc , they would be able to place at his disposal for the troops who were coming to Skardu The conference was attended by all the invitees except the Raja of Rondhu, who was reported to have turned hostile It was rumoured that he was urging the raiders to attack Skardu without delay He also detained the State's dak-runners and threatened them with death if they carried any messages for the State authorities [2] Apart from the activities of the Raja of Rondhu, two letters were captured inciting the Muslim troops at Skardu to rebel These letters were written by Captain Hassan Khan, an officer of 6 Jammu & Kashmir Infantry, who had gone over to the other side Captain Nek Alam of the Skardu garrison got these letters and very loyally had them sent to Srinagar for record

Lieut-Colonel Thapa started a detailed reconnaissance of his new position soon after his arrival at Skardu

Skardu, he found, was situated in a small valley through which

incident, Lieut-Colonel Thapa lost no time in stationing his permanent posts on either bank of the Indus at Tsari, as explained above Unfortunately the only means of communication between Skardu and Tsari was by runners, which was obviously unsatisfactory and unreliable. The last message from Tsari reached Skardu on 9 February Although they were to be destroyed in a few hours, the State Force troops there had no premonition of danger and reported all quiet.

There were now left at Skardu only 40 Sikh troops and 31 Muslim troops, apart from the few officers Strenuous preparations were started to improve the defences of Skardu fort and to stock it with all provisions But his force was ridiculously tiny and Lieut-Colonel Thapa was glad to learn that reinforcements were already on their way to Skardu to strengthen him

The first reinforcement column left Srinagar for Skardu at 1000 hours on 15 January 1948 It was made up of two companies of the State Force troops It reached Sonamarg, 83 km from Srinagar, on 20 January Crossing the Zoji La in the height of winter was a desperate undertaking, but, by good luck, hard work and courage, the troops climbed over on 30 January Pushing their way through the frozen wastes of Matayan and Pindras, they went on to Dras and Kargil Due to the narrow track and the few huts available for shelter beyond Zoji La, the column had split up into several parties. The leading party under Captain Parbat Singh reached Bagicha on 7 February, and, at last, entered Skardu on 10 February. The local garrison and inhabitants received the tired men with shouts of joy, thinking that their worst days of fear and uncertainty were over Lieut-Colonel Thapa had now 130 non-Muslim and 31 Muslim troops under his command Of the enemy there was no sign.

THE SIEGE BEGINS

The raiders, however, were not idle all these weeks They completed all their preparations by the beginning of February and moved out against Skardu. Their total strength was about 600, made up of tribal raiders, Chitralis and about 80 deserters of the Jammu and Kashmir army They had modern rifles and 2-inch and 3-inch mortars, and were led by professional soldiers, prominent among them being Major Ehsan Ali, Captain Muhammad Khan and Lieut Babar Khan [3] Ehsan Ali and Muhammad Khan belonged to 6 Jammu & Kashmir Infantry, while Babar Khan was an officer of the Gilgit Scouts

Their force marched up the Indus valley route, maintaining strict secrecy. The State Force platoon on the left bank of the Indus at Tsari learnt of their advance only when it was suddenly attacked by overwhelming numbers on the night of 9/10 February. The result was a foregone conclusion, and before long the survivors were captured and led off towards Gilgit Soon after, the Sikh troops, and Captain Krishna Singh himself, were murdered in cold blood The State Force platoon

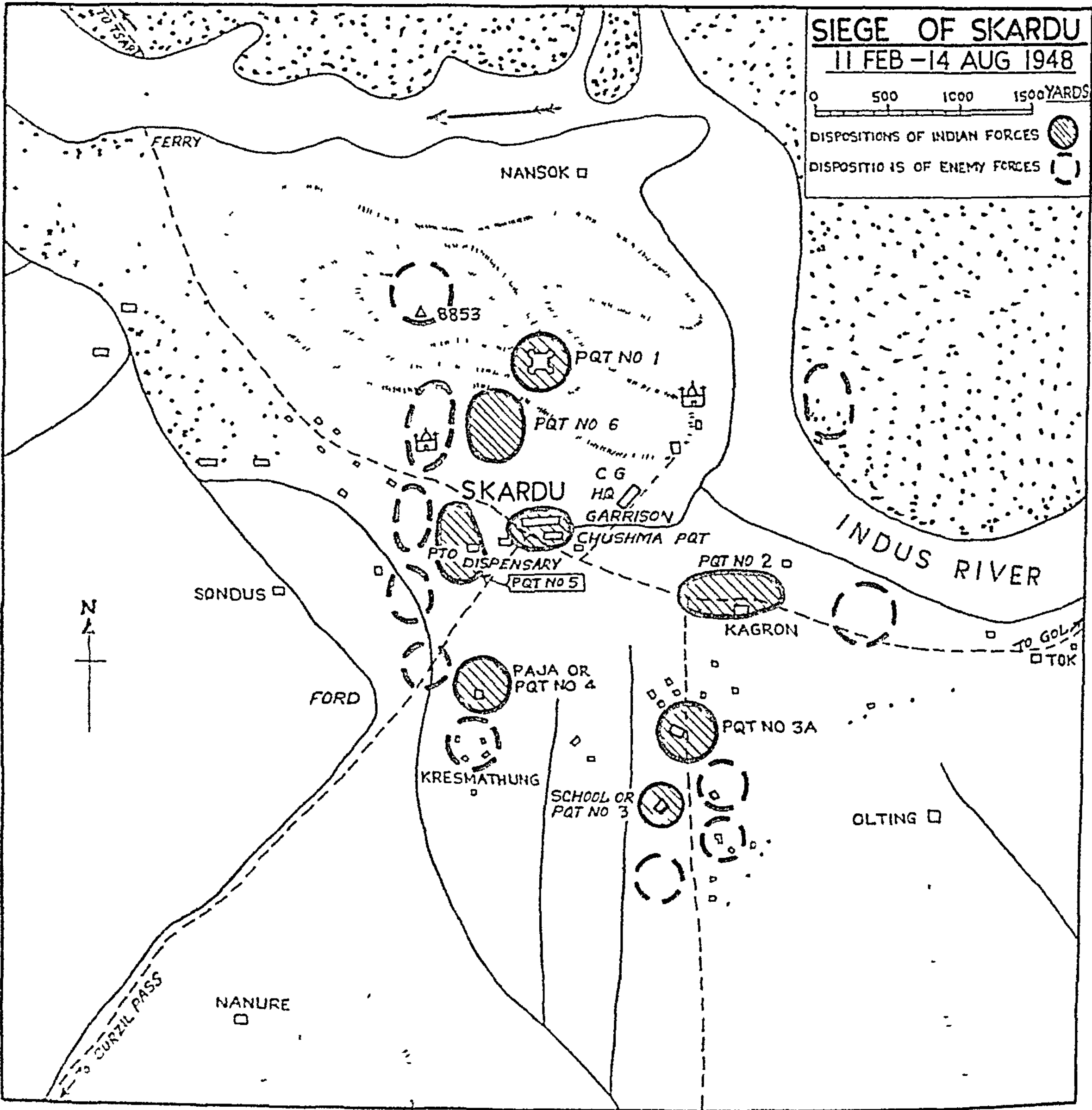
under Captain Nek Alam, which was composed entirely of Muslims, went over to the enemy without resistance Perhaps it was a case of prudence before valour Whatever be the truth, Skardu's outposts disappeared while the garrison slept in blissful ignorance of the nearness of danger

After disposing of the outposts at Tsari, the hostiles went on to Skardu The villagers along their route must have become aware of what was happening, but no whisper of the impending attack reached the Skardu garrison

Early on the morning of 11 February, the troops in Skardu were woken up by a terrific shouting, and sounds of heavy rifle fire Everyone rushed to his post on the walls of the fort They were just in time Though the surprise was complete, the first critical assaults were thrown back The enemy attacked again and again, using 2-inch and 3-inch mortars, medium machine guns and light machine guns, and helped by loud war cries of the tribal rabble But their best chance was gone The troops of the garrison rallied and fought back with determination and cool courage The town, lying at the foot of the fort, was sacked by the raiders, but that was the limit of their success After a battle lasting six hours, the enemy gave up the attack and retreated in disorder They left behind 10 dead and one wounded (who was made a prisoner of war) and some arms and ammunition, including a medium machine gun and a 2-inch mortar They also left behind the body of Wazir Amar Nath and several other non-Muslims whom they had murdered in the town The defenders suffered 7 Other Ranks killed, and 1 officer and 15 Other Ranks wounded The W/T set was left with nobody to operate it, but fortunately Thapa had been a Signals officer once and took charge of the W/T set himself

The newly captured prisoner of war was interrogated. He revealed that the total strength of the raiders near Skardu was then 600 men, of whom about half were used in the attack on Skardu on 11 February, led by Major Ehsan Ali [4] This officer, fortunately, was a poor tactician and cleared out from the Skardu area for a few days after his repulse, thus allowing two other batches of reinforcements to reach Skardu unmolested Captain Ajit Singh entered Skardu on 13 February with 70 men, and another column of the same strength reached Skardu on 15 February

Skardu was now held by 285 men. Although double the strength of the garrison that had beaten back the first hurried enemy attack on 11 February, the size of his force was too small for Lieut-Colonel Thapa to defend Skardu properly The fort itself required several companies of troops to man the walls, and there was also an outer perimeter, made up of a number of self-contained picquets, which gave some depth to the defences Pt 8853, the highest feature just behind the fort, should also have been held, but Thapa had too few troops to do so He had to use civilian volunteers to carry water and rations to the men even at the


SIEGE OF SKARDU
11 FEB – 14 AUG 1948
0
500
1000
1500 YARDS
DISPOSITIONS OF INDIAN FORCES
DISPOSITIONS OF ENEMY FORCES
TO TSAR
FERRY
NANSOK
8853
PQT NO 1
PQT NO 6
SKARDU
C G
HQ
GARRISON
CHUSHMA PQT
PTO
DISPENSARY
PQT NO 5
INDUS RIVER
PQT NO 2
KAGRON
TO GOL
TOK
SONDUS
N
FORD
PAJA OR
PQT NO 4
KRESMATHUNG
PQT NO 3A
SCHOOL OR
PQT NO 3
OLTING
NANURE
CURZIL PASS

picquets. There was no dearth of such civilians, for all the surviving non-Muslims of Skardu town, and many of the Muslims too, had flocked to the fort for protection. The Hindus and Sikhs were lodged inside the fort while room was found for the Muslim refugees between the fort and the outer perimeter The civilians under Lieut-Colonel Thapa's protection numbered:

Non-Muslim refugees	— 229
Muslim refugees	— 19
Muslim civil prisoners	— 22

After their temporary discomfiture on 11 February 1948 the hostiles returned to the attack four days later. They occupied the hill feature called Pt. 8853 during the night of 14/15 February This peak, it will be remembered, lay just behind (north-west of) Skardu fort and snipers on its slopes began to fire at individuals moving about within the fort Medium machine guns were also placed on Pt 8853, and the raiders occupied in strength the village of Nansok, which lay behind the hill, and about 2 km north of Skardu By 19 February, their strength at Nansok and the Blukro hill rose to 500 men Hostiles were also seen at Sondus, Gomba Skardu and Kapashna villages situated in the valley west of Skardu. The sniping and shelling of the fort also increased, and from 21 February to 24 February, 2-inch and 3-inch mortars fired frequently. The raiders' strength was growing from day to day But the Skardu garrison was not yet closely besieged Fighting patrols from the fort went out every day, and searched the countryside up to a radius of 8 km A major engagement took place on 24 February, when one of these patrols, about a platoon in strength, was ambushed by two platoons of the raiders Fighting lasted for several hours, but Thapa's troops were able to extricate themselves with only two casualties.

With their growing strength, the hostiles grew bolder. On 4 March 1948, they shelled Skardu garrison for an hour, concentrating on the "School Picquet", the "Raja Picquet" and "No 6 Picquet " Their 2-inch and 3-inch mortars were silenced by accurate fire of 3-inch mortars from the fort, but one member of the small garrison was again seriously wounded. On 6 March, a force of 2 platoons made an assault on one of the picquets, with their mortars giving covering fire This attack also was beaten off, and the raiders left behind one dead without inflicting any casualty on the garrison Another highly successful encounter took place on 14 March, when a hostile patrol was caught in an ambush It suffered several casualties, but received support from the light machine guns on Pt. 8853 and succeeded in carrying away its wounded and dead

BRIGADIER FAQIR SINGH AMBUSHED

Meanwhile, Lieut-Colonel Thapa had been asking urgently for more reinforcements, and his demands were obviously justified.

Accordingly, about one company of the State Force troops with two 2-inch mortars and two MMGs had been despatched from Srinagar on 17 February for Skardu, under the code name of 'Biscuit Column' A platoon of troops joined the column at Kargil, and Brigadier Faqir Singh, the column commander, moved from there on 8 March for Parkutta and Gol He was accompanied by Major Coutts, an officer of 6 Rajputana Rifles of the Indian Army. The cold was intense and the men suffered terribly, but Brigadier Faqir Singh consoled himself with the thought that the atrocious weather would have immobilised the enemy also He was wrong The hostiles knew of his coming and had made their plans to deal with him They pulled out most of their troops from the siege of Skardu, while those left behind kept up a smart fire on Skardu fort to deceive the garrison About 100 of the raiders set up an ambush near Gol, about 32 km east of Skardu, where the track went through a narrow gorge [5] They were outnumbered by Brigadier Faqir Singh's force, but the ground favoured them, the element of surprise was on their side, and ambushing was game they all thoroughly understood It was 15 March when Lieut-Colonel Thapa's look-outs saw some raiders marching off towards Gol The next day, a bigger body of the raiders was seen hurrying towards Kuardo and Gol Lieut-Colonel Thapa had been informed that a relieving column under Brigadier Faqir Singh was moving up to Skardu and was expected to reach him on 18 March So he immediately realised that the hostiles were going to intercept the column before it reached Skardu. But he could not warn Brig Faqir Singh, whose single W/T set had broken down at Kargil. Thapa, however, reported the hostile movement to Srinagar, suggesting an air strike against the raiders Unfortunately, the Air Force was fully pre-occupied elsewhere and no air strikes took place.

On 17 March 1948, Brigadier Faqir Singh's column entered the gloomy gorge of Thurgo, midway between Gol and Skardu, hoping to reach Skardu before long The raiders were nowhere in sight But, suddenly bullets began to rain down on it from the steep heights on either side The startled troops tried to rally and hold on, but soon 3-inch and 2-inch mortar bombs came crashing among them and inflicted several casualties [6] The Brigadier was himself wounded, and panic seems to have prevailed In the confusion, the raiders succeeded in looting the baggage train and the ammunition boxes. The column fell back, having lost 26 men killed, 7 missing believed killed, and 18 wounded. Much booty and war material fell into the hands of the raiders, including 27 rifles, 5 sten guns, 2 Vickers Berthier machine guns, 64,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 84 hand grenades, 51 HE bombs of the 2-inch mortar and 204 HE bombs of 3-inch mortar. The column reassembled at Kargil By 2 April, Brigadier Faqir Singh was back at Srinagar, leaving his troops under Major Coutts at Kargil Thus ended the second attempt to reinforce Skardu

On 18 March, Lieut-Colonel Thapa made up a little column of two weak platoons out of his slender garrison, and marched out boldly to receive Brigadier Faqir Singh according to the information he had received from Srinagar He had not marched many kilometres before the villagers told him of the events of the previous day and the defeat of the relieving column Dejected by the news, his troops also had to face an ambush laid by the raiders But Thapa's veterans rallied immediately, kept up a running fight for 8 km, and ended it without suffering a single casualty It was a heartening performance and must have given the raiders fresh food for thought

After the defeat of the Biscuit Column near Gol, the hostiles stepped up their pressure against the Skardu garrison They had captured much arms and ammunition from the column, and they also knew that, unless Skardu was taken quickly, more troops would be sent from Srinagar to reinforce it Time, they felt, was not on their side.

So they mounted a well prepared assault against Skardu At 0300 hours on 28 March, one of the picquets, called No 6 Picquet, was suddenly attacked by about two platoons of the raiders, who greatly outnumbered the tiny garrison of two sections in the post The attack was supported by heavy fire from 3-inch and 2-inch mortars, and medium machine guns from Pt 8853, but the defenders stood firm This was perhaps only a diversion, and the real attack came two hours later Swarms of raiders stormed Skardu garrison from all sides, while their mortars and automatic weapons threw a deluge of bombs and bullets at Thapa's little band Furious fighting raged the whole day, but the defences held firm At the end of the day, the garrison had suffered six casualties, including two men killed, and two of the picquets, namely School and Raja, remained cut off from the main position The enemy had fired over 100 rounds from his 3-inch mortars that day The bitter battle continued for several days, and the two southern picquets, commanded by Captain Ajit Singh and Jemadar Piar Singh respectively, held on Captain Ajit Singh was wounded on 30 March, but did not leave his post His men went without water for several days, but kept on fighting During the night of 3/4 April, contact was re-established with the two picquets by means of 'runners' who managed to crawl through to them, and gradually the hostiles gave up the attack

Another attempt to capture Skardu was made on 7 April 1948 The raiders' assault again broke up against the main defences, but the School Picquet was once more cut off It remained cut off for three days On 9 April, Lieut-Colonel Thapa thus reported to Srinagar: "Hostile pressure terrific. Our key picquet cut off last four days and fighting without water. Its fall certain today and fort cannot survive one hour after that Only immediate air support can save us now " The situation was critical, but the Skardu garrison rose to the occasion once more. At dawn on 10 April, Naik Chatru of 6 Jammu and Kashmir Infantry led a fierce sortie

from the fort and cut his way through the raiders. School Picquet was saved at the last moment and the raiders fell back, weakened by their casualties and discouraged by their defeat. The indomitable garrison of Skardu held on, hoping that they would soon be relieved by fresh troops coming from Srinagar

DISASTER AT KARGIL

Reinforcements were already under way for Skardu. The Indian Army units were fully occupied in the bitter fighting of Uri and Punch sectors But all available troops of 5 J & K Infantry and 7 J & K Infantry, about one and a half battalions, were collected for the relief of Skardu On 30 March, 7 officers and about 400 men of 5 K.I. reached Srinagar from Jammu On 1 April, a party consisting of 1 officer, 1 VCO and 40 Other Ranks was reaching Kargil, and another party of 3 VCOs and 30 Other Ranks was only one stage behind it With the help of these reinforcements, Major Coutts was ordered by 163 Brigade to make Kargil into a firm base defended by a company of troops, a detachment of mortars and a section of MMGs He was also instructed to move one company forward to Bagicha and another to Parkutta, converting each of these localities into defended bases.

On 3 April, the first batch of 5 K.I. left Srinagar for Kargil. It consisted of one officer and 37 other combatants and carried a 3-inch mortar, a 2-inch mortar, 3 Bren guns, 7 sten guns and plenty of ammunition Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh of the Indian Army, who had been till then a Major and 2 IC of 1 Sikh, was the commander of this batch, and his column was named the 'Sugar Column' His instructions were to relieve Skardu, leave there the majority of his troops to strengthen the garrison and return with the civilians there For this purpose, he was made the commander of all the State Forces in the Kargil-Skardu area He was also informed that two companies of 7 K.I and a section of MMGs were already at Kargil under Major Coutts and that one company of 7 K I with a section of 3-inch mortars was just then reaching Kargil Major Coutts was to act as Staff Officer to Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh

Another batch of 5 K I followed Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh the next day It consisted of 70 officers and men and carried two 2-inch mortars, 6 Bren guns, 14 sten guns and plenty of ammunition On 8 April, the 3rd batch of 5 K I left Srinagar under the command of Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh of the 5 K I His force consisted of 69 men and carried one 2-inch mortar, 3 Bren guns and 9 sten guns He was designated the commander of the relief column to Skardu Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh was to be left behind between Kargil and Skardu to hold one of the strongly defended localities

There were now about two battalions of the State Force moving on to Skardu It was, for the theatre, a strong force, as proved by its

armaments listed below
Arms taken by Biscuit Column and Sugar Column

Item	Biscuit Column	Sugar Column
Rifles	255	252
Sten guns	48	61
Bren guns	27	23
Pistols signal	6	10
2-inch mortars	9	7
3-inch mortars	2	3
MMGs	2	4

Lieut-Colonel Sher Jung Thapa was sending urgent requests from Skardu for early reinforcements. On 11 April, therefore, 163 Brigade ordered Major Coutts to advance immediately from Kargil towards Skardu. From this date onwards, there was a stream of men all the way from Srinagar to Kargil moving up towards Skardu. On 14 April, Major Coutts' party was 14 km beyond Bagicha, the first batch from Srinagar was just entering Kargil, the second batch was near Dras, the third at Matayan, and the fourth and fifth at Gumri The sixth batch was just leaving Srinagar

By then the troubles of these columns were growing On 17 April, Major Coutts reached Parkutta after a long night march He found the village silent and deserted He reported back that further advance was impossible unless 100 pack ponies were sent to him from Kargil He also wanted five signalling lamps and a dozen W/T sets of type No. 48, because it was not possible with the single No 22 W/T set with him to co-ordinate the advance of his column, which had to move along either bank of the river for the sake of tactical support Major Coutts also complained against the weather, which was cold and wet Two days later, he reported that the raiders had surrounded his column, and were sniping it from the heights Supplies of ammunition were wanted immediately and he concluded with the hope that though his troops were raw, they "definitely should hold" the attacks To this, Headquarters 163 Brigade replied that his troops were certainly far better than the irregulars opposing him, and he should explain how his stock of ammunition was expended in a single short engagement.

The next day, 20 April, Coutts informed 163 Brigade that his force lost 6 men killed and 9 wounded the previous day, and that 2 light machine guns and 3 rifles had fallen into the enemy's hands The raiders were two platoons in strength, with one 3-inch mortar, two 2-inch mortars, two medium machine guns and 6 Bren guns They were well trained, and had the fullest support of the locals His own troops had low morale, the ground was unfavourable to him, and he had to leave behind strong garrisons at the main villages as he advanced Due to the

shortage of transport, only a moderate amount of ammunition had been carried by his column Finally, Major Coutts requested immediate air attacks on the raiders opposing him

The hostiles kept up their desultory firing on Coutts' force, and, on 21 April, tried to infiltrate into his position via the Katicho *Nala* The attempt was beaten back But the raiders kept up their pressure, and on 24 April, Coutts reported that all his troops were already committed in the fighting and he had no reserves left He urgently wanted reinforcements, ammunition and rations from Kargil, where Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh had arrived with his force on 21 April

The day after reaching Kargil, Lieut-Colonel S B. Singh received orders from HQ 163 Brigade to push on to Parkutta and to carry with him rations, ammunition and No 48 W/T sets for Coutts On 26 April, the Sugar Column under S B Singh reached Bagicha, where it received orders to speed up the advance and reach Skardu by 29 April. He replied promising to do his best to carry out the order, but he remained halted on 27 April due to lack of transport Coutts also remained immobile at Parkutta, due to hostile opposition and the absence of coolies, although he had received orders from Lieut-Colonel S.B Singh to push on one stage further On 28 April, Singh marched up from Bagicha to near Parkutta, where Coutts was greatly relieved to hand over control of the operations to him.

Meanwhile, Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh was slowly wending his way through the gorges towards Dras and Kargil He was in an unhappy situation, as HQ 163 Bde continued to send orders direct to Maj Coutts and Lt-Col S.B Singh without even informing Lt-Col Kripal Singh who was supposed to be the commander of the entire relief column Lt-Col S B Singh and Maj Coutts also, he claimed, ignored him and kept him in the dark, maintaining no communication with him at all He felt that, although on his strong representations Brig Lakhinder Singh (Commander 163 Bde) and Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh had made him the column commander in place of Lt-Col S B Singh, he had no effective control over the column strung out over 160 km of track In order to concentrate his force and acquire effective control, Lt-Col Kripal Singh ordered on 27 April that no troops should be moved without his prior sanction On 1 May, Lt-Col S.B Singh reported these developments to 163 Brigade and asked for a clarification of the position In reply, 163 Brigade informed all concerned that Lieut-Colonel S B. Singh would be in independent command of the foremost column, and that Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh would take over from him as soon as he (Kripal Singh) caught up with the advance guard Kripal Singh had reached Kargil on 30 April, and he was ordered to hurry up and to push forward at the best pace possible. 163 Brigade also impressed on everybody the need to work in co-operation But it produced no improvement, and friction continued between the two senior officers. The raiders were all around the isolated parts of the column, no coolies or pack ponies were

available, and rations' stocks were getting low at Parkutta The advance was at a standstill On 4 May, 163 Brigade finally ordered that Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh alone would be in command of the entire relief column and responsible for saving the starving garrison of Skardu, Major Coutts would remain with him as merely an Indian Army Observer, and Lieut-Colonel S B Singh would return to Srinagar About this time (1-2 May) the troops of the column were located as follows·

Four platoons of 5 J & K Infantry, plus one detachment of 3-inch mortars, plus some troops of 7 J & K Infantry	—Parkutta
Tac HQ 5 J & K Infantry, Signal platoon, one coy and one section MG	—Kargil
One platoon plus a detachment of 3-inch mortars	—Nearing Dras
One company less one platoon plus a detachment of 3-inch mortars	—Gumri
Six platoons, a 3-inch mortar and a section MMG	—Sonamarg

The forward troops at Parkutta were deployed on both the banks of the Indus Four platoons were on the north bank of the river, holding platoon picquets, with a reserve platoon at hand On the south bank of the river, there were four picquets and the reserve was located nearby, and one platoon had accompanied Major Coutts to Kargil to fetch rations

By then these operations were reaching a crisis In Skardu, Lieut-Colonel Thapa's position was deteriorating day by day. On 15 April, he had reported that all his 3-inch mortar bombs were expended, 2-inch mortar ammunition was also nearing exhaustion and even rifle cartridges were in short supply. He complained, quite justifiably, that the progress of the relieving column was very slow, and feared that all his ammunition might be exhausted before he was reinforced But more and more troops were coming up to Kargil, and it seemed clear that soon their preponderance in numbers and fire-power would be so great that Skardu would be relieved in spite of all the difficulties and handicaps.

The hostile leaders also recognised their danger If they went on waiting to be attacked, they were lost indeed But they had captured the initiative and moral ascendancy during the recent skirmishes, and had obviously a poor opinion of their opponents in the Kargil sector So their commander decided on a brilliant and daring stroke, designed to destroy the Indian forces before him, capture Kargil itself and make the fall of Skardu virtually certain

The great plan was based essentially on the fact that the Indian line of communication from Srinagar to Skardu ran parallel to the front for much of the distance. The enemy commander had about 800 men at his disposal in the Skardu sector Of these, about 200 men were to be left to besiege Skardu and to prevent the rapid advance of the relieving column

beyond Parkutta The rest were to be used for a right hook against the Indian line of communication from Sonamarg to Kargil. The base for this right hook was Chilam Chowki on the main Gilgit-Srinagar route The preliminary operations were well thought out and planned in detail. From Chilam Chowki, a force of 250 men was to march south, cross the Burzil Pass, occupy Gurais, cross the Rajdiangan Pass and demonstrate against Bandipur. This would distract the attention of the Jammu and Kashmir Force and might even result in Indian reserves being rushed off to that quarter Then, the raiders were to hurry back to Gurais, and set off due east for the real stroke, leaving about 150 men near Gurais to protect the Burzil route and the base of operations

The operation was to be carried out by four separate columns with distinct but coordinated roles.[7] The first column of 2 platoons was to advance from Gurais via the Tilel valley and Baodab, then turn south and strike the Indian line of communication near Gund. Its task was to destroy the wooden bridges on the route, thus preventing the rapid movement of troops from Srinagar to Dras and Kargil. The second column, also of 2 platoons, was to accompany the first column up to Baodab, and then keep going east, cross the main Himalayan range by the Kaobal Gali, move down the Muski *Nala* and cut the line of communication near Pindras The third and the fourth columns were to set out together from Chilam Chowki, climb up to the Deosai Plains and go down the Shingo valley to Gultari. From there, the third column of about 100 men, was to march to Dras and capture it The last column, of about 250 men with two 3-inch mortars, was to advance down the Shingo river and capture Kargil itself All the columns were to strike at their objectives on the same day, 10 May 1948, and their marching tables were arranged accordingly Meanwhile the raiders near Parkutta were to fall back gradually towards Skardu, drawing the main Indian column after them and away from Kargil.

In conformity with this plan, the feint attack against Bandipur was carried out on 28 April The main force of 350 men concentrated at Chilam Chowki on 29 April. The plan was re-examined and finalised Surprise was to be their decisive advantage, and the difficult route and intense cold were their major hurdles. Each man of the attacking force was given one week's rations and 150 rounds of rifle ammunition to carry, apart from his blanket. Coolies and sledges were used to carry the reserve stock of 10 days' rations, spare ammunition, and the two 3-inch mortars The main force moved out of Chilam Chowki at 0100 hours on 1 May. For three days and nights it advanced through a desolate wilderness of rocks and snow at an altitude of about 4270 metres No shelter or fuel wood was available, and the men subsisted on their pre-cooked rations A snow blizzard caught them on the second day But they were hardy locals used to these conditions, and on the Deosai Plains the going was easy On the evening of the third day they reached Gultari, having lost 4 men dead in the snow and with about 60 other casualties due to frost bite But Gultari was comparatively sheltered,

fuel was available, and beyond it the route was easier

The first and second columns left Gurais on 3 May In the upper Tilel valley the snow was deeper because of the heavier rainfall They found the route exceptionally difficult, and the second column, aimed at Pindras, was delayed by a day in its march The other three columns harboured in the night of 9/10 May within easy striking distance of their objectives

With the coming of dawn on 10 May, the first column set fire to several bridges between Sonamarg and Kangan The second column was then still struggling in the snow about 48 km from Pindras The third column launched an attack against Dras But the garrison, although taken completely by surprise, promptly manned its defences and beat off the raiders

The main attack on Kargil was completely successful. First the raiders crept up to a section of Gorkha troops guarding the Kharal bridge across the Shingo river, less than 16 km from Kargil Not one man out of this platoon was allowed to escape and warn the garrison of Kargil Then the raiders attacked Kargil The garrison, outnumbered and taken by surprise, could offer no effective opposition The raiders had sneaked around and occupied positions on the hill behind the town, and their 3-inch mortars played havoc with the defenders running to their positions [8] The fight was soon over, the garrison scattered and escaped by batches, some up the Indus towards Leh, others up the Suru to Pahalgam

The last act of this dismal tragedy was soon played out On 4 May, 163 Brigade had informed Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh that, according to a reliable report, the raiders were advancing from Gurais area to Dras and had asked him to establish a firm base at Dras with a garrison of one company. Accordingly, one company (less one platoon) of 5 K I , which had then reached Dras under Captain Kashmir Singh, was ordered to halt there and form a firm base But with the fall of Kargil, the main column between Parkutta and Bagicha was caught between the enemy in front and the enemy behind. Under energetic leadership, it could still have turned the tables by attacking and defeating the two hostile forces in turn But the situation was confused and no detailed account of what happened appears available The tail of the column was near Bagicha under Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh HQ 5 K I. and about two platoons with a section of MMGs and a detachment of 3-inch mortars were at Mirpigund near Tolti, about 22 km from Bagicha, under Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh The head of the column was near Parkutta, about 25 km further on, where there were over three coys of troops and two detachments of 3-inch mortars. The raiders had infiltrated in between and opposed every movement of any part of the column Thus split up, immobilised and dispirited, the column fell an easy prey to the raiders, although in theory it was still very strong and capable of overcoming all opposition.

However, Lt-Col Sampuran Bachan Singh and Major Coutts fell

back hurriedly from Bagicha soon after the fall of Kargil. Then their troops were attacked and quickly dispersed, the two officers saving their lives by swimming across the ice-cold Indus and fleeing up the valley They reached Khalatse bridge on the Leh route on 13 May.[9]

After the exit of Lt-Col Sampuran Bachan Singh and his contingent, there were still about 600 men of 5 K I and 7 K I left under Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh between Tolti and Parkutta On 12 May, Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh's message read, "Completely surrounded Enemy attacking all sides Cut off from all sides Situation grave " After thus repeating himself several times, he went on to ask for immediate air strikes to extricate his force and for supply drops from the air. Major-General Thimayya passed on his request to Western Command adding that unless the column was given immediate support from the air or permitted to withdraw, it was quite likely to surrender. On 15 May, Western Command sanctioned a withdrawal with a view to the recapture of Kargil, and General Thimayya ordered all the troops in Skardu and Parkutta and Tolti to fight their way out and concentrate at Olthingthang near Marol [10] As related below, the Skardu garrison was exempted from his order on Thapa's representation, but Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh started pulling back in obedience to it. He had supplies weighing about 18750 kg, and no local porters were available The raiders were harassing his column from either bank of the Indus Still, Kripal Singh sent orders to his isolated parties of troops They retreated from Parkutta on 20 May, and left Tolti behind on the night of 21/22 May By 1200 hours on 22 May, the column was near Kharmang bridge Suddenly the raiders attacked it from all sides—the column had walked into an ambush again The local coolies immediately threw down their loads and fled The column suffered about 200 casualties, lost its baggage and heavy equipment, and practically ceased to be an operational force

But it still retained some cohesion, and, since Kargil had already fallen, it struck out south-west into the hills After terrible privations over the trackless waste of snow and avoiding the usual routes, the men reached Faranshat in the valley of the Shingo river Misfortune again overtook them there The men were crossing the turbulent river by an old rope bridge when the enemy suddenly appeared In the confusion, the rope bridge broke, and the survivors split up into two parties, fleeing westwards along either bank of the Shingo The party on the right or south bank of the river, consisting of A and B coys of 7 K.I , found the going very tough. It soon decided, therefore, to turn due south and make for Dras But on 1 June 1948 it again encountered the raiders when only a few kilomêtres from Dras The men were starving and completely done up by the terrible ordeal of the previous fortnight They were practically unarmed and were easily overpowered, and only 2 survivors reached Srinagar on 8 June to tell the tragic story

The party on the left bank of the Shingo river consisted of about

150 men and was led by Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh himself It shook off the pursuit, crossed the Shingo near Gultari and again struck into the mountains to the south Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh and his 150 exhausted men reached Sonamarg and safety in June Thus ended the strong column of which so much had been hoped

DRAS FALLS TO THE RAIDERS

Efforts were then made to relieve Dras Indian troops were then located as follows[11].

Two platoons of 5 Kashmir Infantry at Dras,

One company of 5 Kashmir Infantry at Gumri,

One platoon of 5 Kashmir Infantry at Baltal; and

One platoon of 5 Kashmir Infantry at Sonamarg

These troops were obviously insufficient for clearing the vital track upto Dras So 1 Patiala (less two companies) was ordered to concentrate at Sonamarg from 17 May 1948, and to relieve the little SF detachments strung out upto Dras

The main features of the terrain along the track may be recapitulated Upto Baltal it was a good road, running along the gorge of the Sind river in Kashmir proper This section of the route was firmly held by troops of Sri Division, although the raiders could, and did, make occasional harassing attacks on it in small parties crossing over from the Tilel valley At Baltal the track left the valley of the Sind and climbed up steeply to the Zoji La, about 915 metres above Baltal and only about 5 km away Beyond the pass, the track continued on almost the same elevation On either side of it rose the steep shoulders of the great mountain, from which snow slopes came down almost to the track even in summer. About 6 km from the Zoji La the narrow defile broadened out into the little Gumri plain where a goat track from Bot Kulan Gali joined it About 3 km beyond Gumri was Machhoi, with its little Rest House and dak-runners' hut surrounded by ice and rocks Matayan, about 13 km from Machhoi, was the first village after leaving Baltal. From Matayan, the caravan route went on about 10 km to Pindras and a further 16 km to Dras The entire route was flanked and commanded by tall cliffs and ridges on either side, rising 1500 metres to 1800 metres above the track It was indeed a difficult terrain for regular troops to operate in. The altitude of Zoji La was 3,528 metres, that of Dras was 3250 metres

According to the orders issued, a company of 1 Patiala went up the Zoji La on 21 May and took up positions in the defile beyond On 22 May, one of its platoons, holding a position at Gumri, was attacked by the hostiles using two medium machine guns, 4 light machine guns and also 2-inch mortars The platoon replied, but the superior volume of enemy fire continued unabated Then the company of 1 Patiala launched an attack, supported by medium machine guns and 3-inch mortars Fresh snow lay deep on the ground, and the raiders, flushed

with their recent successes, fought hard But their positions were captured after a hand to hand fight, and they retreated to Matayan. 1 Patiala suffered heavy casualties, including 12 men killed, and 5 Kashmir Infantry also lost 5 dead and 5 wounded The raiders left behind 21 dead, and their total casualties were estimated at over 50 men

During the days following, other companies of 1 Patiala moved up from Srinagar to Sonamarg and Zoji La But the battalion could not exert its full strength at the front, as it had also to guard a long and vulnerable line of communication from Kangan to Baltal The raiders were showing surprising initiative and boldness, and one night they kidnapped a Sub-Inspector of Police and four of his men from their police station, well inside the Sind valley. Other units were not then available for taking over the protection of the vital line of communication 1 Patiala, therefore, could not concentrate in Machhoi for the drive to Dras, but had to content itself with vigorous patrolling, laying ambushes and trying to inflict the maximum casualties on the raiders

The two platoons of 5 Kashmir Infantry holding out in Dras waited anxiously for the relief column to advance from Zoji La and link up with them But, as the days lengthened into weeks, they began to lose hope The raiders were getting stronger every day, and kept firing at the little garrison from morning till night At last Captain Kashmir Singh, the officer commanding the little post, decided to break out. He had already defied the overwhelming numerical superiority of the raiders for almost four weeks At 2300 hours on 6 June, he and his men crept out of Dras Marching briskly the whole night, they took up a defensive position on a hill overlooking Pindras There they were discovered by the raiders at 1400 hours, and were subjected to intense fire from medium machine guns and mortars They fought back gallantly, and when night came, their position was still intact Soon after mid-night, they stole out of their position, and proceeded towards Machhoi Due to the darkness and the incredibly difficult terrain, they could not keep together and broke up into small parties Most of the men were captured or killed. But a few went on, marching during the nights where there were no tracks and hiding during day-light, and finally reached Machhoi on 11 June and the days following The fall of Dras was thus confirmed

With Dras already gone, offensive operations by 1 Patiala lost their main purpose It was still desirable to hold the positions beyond the Zoji La, to facilitate the advance to Dras and Kargil expected later So 1 Patiala and platoons of 5 Kashmir Infantry maintained their picquets, the forward most of which was about 5 km beyond Machhoi, some others being around Gumri, and on Pt 15305 overlooking the Zoji La

Brisk patrolling and short, sharp attacks against the Indian picquets continued in June. But the hostiles were gaining strength every day About the middle of June, the survivors from Dras reported seeing about 500 raiders near Dras and about 300 more near Matayan They

were provided with 3-inch mortars, medium machine guns and light machine guns, and had ample ammunition, which they had probably captured at Kargil and Parkutta Mortars and automatic weapons were used freely against 1 Patiala almost every day The attacks of the raiders steadily increased in intensity, although every attack was beaten back with losses In a major attack on the Gumri position on 18 June, about 20 raiders were killed and some 30 wounded But two days later the raiders returned in strength and tried to infiltrate in between the Indian positions. They were again repulsed. On 21 June, the raiders attacked the forward post, and fired 68 mortar bombs at it from their 3-inch mortars Pony convoys between Zoji La and Gumri were also fired on, and the line of communication was in danger of being intercepted. Parties of raiders were seen every day, digging machine gun pits, and climbing up the steep heights north of Machhoi and Gumri to outflank the Indian positions

On 25 June 1948, Headquarters 1 Patiala moved up from Sonamarg to Baltal, and B company of the battalion was sent forward to replace men of 5 Kashmir Infantry at Machhoi The raiders had further stepped up their attacks, using innumerable small parties to infiltrate around the Patiala's positions and to maintain fire against them with their automatic small arms On 26 June, about 7,000 rounds were fired at the Gumri posts, and the next day another 9,000 bullets fell in and around it The only advantage the Indian troops had was in their "fire discipline" and the scientific accuracy of their mortars, which obtained several direct hits on the raiders' machine guns The Indian positions remained intact, but on 27 June Lieut-Colonel Sukhdev Singh commanding 1 Patiala felt compelled to inform the Divisional Commander, Major-General Thimayya, that the long line of communication was likely to be cut unless more troops were sent for the operation Within a few hours his foreboding was justified, for during the night of 27/28 June, the raiders attacked Kangan and tried to burn down a bridge on the road only 37 km from Srinagar They were dispersed quickly by the Indian troops there, but the danger stood revealed

By the end of June 1948, the hostiles were concentrated in the Zoji La sector in a strength of about two battalions They kept up a continual fire against the Indian posts, so that from 2 July all the supplies and ammunition which had to be taken to the forward posts were conveyed only during the hours of darkness

To relieve the hostile pressure, the RIAF made fierce and accurate attacks on 2 July, killing many raiders and blowing up their stone "sangars" near Gumri and Machhoi On the morning of 3 July, the raiders launched another major attack against Gumri, and, for the first time, used a large gun which was either a 4 2-inch mortar or 3 7-inch howitzer. The Patiala had nothing on hand to reply to this, and only another accurate strafing attack by Tempests saved the situation. On 29 June, D company of 2 (Para) Madras had also been sent forward from

husbanded. As the weeks passed, the daily rations were reduced for the garrison, and at last even the soldiers had to subsist on less than 250 grams of wheat flour and 30 grams of 'Dal' per day No 'ghee' or fat of any kind was available to mitigate the rigours of the cold Medicines were also falling short, and the wounded and the sick suffered uncomplainingly In the later stages of the siege, even the wounded and the sick who could just sit up were employed to man the defences, and helped to throw back the raiders' attacks

These attacks never ceased, though they grew fewer and weaker in May, June and July. The main strength of the raiders was concentrated against Dras and Zoji La, and some were away operating against Leh But the besiegers sniped continually and 3-inch mortars fired at the fort from Pt 8853 On one occasion, no less than 200 shells were rained on the garrison from 3-inch mortars, killing two and wounding four of Thapa's gallant company

But the men fought on Offensive patrolling had gradually become impossible, and the raiders hemmed in the garrison within a defended perimeter only 1350 metres long and about 550 metres wide The hostiles crowded in upon them, and established positions only about 45 metres from the garrison's picquets But Lieut-Colonel Thapa had laid down an excellent 'fire plan' and every approach to the fort was covered by the crossing fire of medium machine guns, light machine guns and rifles The bunkers were deep, and were thickly roofed, so that 3-inch mortar shells burst harmlessly on top of them That saved the situation for some time, for the garrison was running short of ammunition also and could not reply to the raiders shell for shell Mortar and small arms ammunition was strictly conserved, and the besiegers opened fire only on specially important or rewarding targets

Meanwhile at Srinagar, Major-General Thimayya was thinking ways and means of stabilising the position in the northern sector The sudden fall of Kargil was a terrible blow, and it was clear that unless Kargil was recaptured and the line of communication restored, all the troops at Parkutta, Gol and Skardu would be lost On paper the Biscuit Column was still strong enough to recapture Kargil, but by then General Thimayya could have had no illusions about its fighting capacity In his desperation, he resolved to give up Skardu and concentrate on recapturing Kargil On 16 May, therefore, he ordered Lieut-Colonel Thapa to break out from Skardu and march back to Olthingthang near Marol, where he was to join Lieut-Colonel Kripal Singh and his columns from Parkutta and Tolti Thimayya expected Lt-Col Sampuran Bachan Singh and Major Coutts also to concentrate their troops at Olthingthang, not knowing that they were already nearing Leh The forces massed near Marol were then to advance southwards and recapture Kargil

This plan was impracticable, for, as Thapa pointed out, the Skardu garrison was too weak to break out and advance about 128 km against

sniper's bullet and the screech of the mortar shells The defenders received supply drops from Tempests on 28 June and on 1 July, but it was far from adequate They used their ammunition sparingly, but even then the stocks were running dangerously low. On 8 July, the last bag of rations was finished. But in response to urgent requests, supply dropping from the air was carried out the same day Three Royal Indian Air Force planes came over and dropped six containers, of which only four could be collected by the garrison The other two dropped into the river beyond the perimeter The next day, the planes reappeared and blasted the raiders' positions on Pt 8853 and Sondus with rockets and cannon shells The air attacks and supply dropping were repeated on 16 and 17 July

But the little silver birds could only ameliorate the garrison's plight, they could not solve the tactical problem The minimum daily requirement of ration alone for the garrison was about 360 kg In addition, Thapa required 200 HE bombs for his 3-inch mortars, 200 HE bombs for his 2-inch mortars and 50,000 rounds of 303 ammunition The average supply drop he received from the Tempests was only 24 mortar bombs and about 1000 rounds of rifle ammunition, apart from medicine, cigarettes, newspapers, etc The available resources of the RIAF were, it appears, not equal to the task of supplying Skardu with all its requirements of food, medicine and ammunition Unarmed transport planes could not be used, probably because the raiders would greet every low flying plane with intense light machine gun fire from Pt 8853 and other high positions The Tempest was not built for supply dropping, with normal fuel load and shells for its 20 mm cannon, it could only carry about 450 kg of bombs, rockets or supplies And half of this small load fell into the enemy lines due to the tiny perimeter held by the garrison But, somehow, the siege continued

July went by on leaden feet Summer had come, and the orchards around Skardu were again clothed in tender leaves The blooming cherry trees splashed patches of brilliant colour against the drab grey of the stony valleys New life throbbed in nature, but the garrison of Skardu awaited each morning with dark premonitions How long could it last? Would that day see the end? They had long since lost all hope The last effort to relieve them had failed A break out was impossible, for the nearest friendly outpost was Gurais, across the high Deosai Plateau, or Zoji La, about 240 km through enemy infested territory The men were reduced to skin and bones, and staggered about their duties like drunken revellers For many weeks their main diet had been barley, which had been collected to feed animals, and so 90 per cent of them were sick. Only their indomitable will still shone in their eyes. But what would the will avail them when the last morsel of food and the last box of ammunition was gone? Prolonged malnutrition was producing malaria and dysentry due to the dying resistance of their bodies The death toll by enemy action was mounting day by day. Still, the siege continued

August came. It was obvious to everybody that the breaking point was being reached. By then. Thapa's gallant band was reduced to two chappaties of barley per day, washed down with one cup of tea, per man. On 4 August, the officers and NCOs in Skardu held a conference at which it was pointed out that the senior commanders had failed to supply them with the minimum requirements of rations and ammunition, there was no hope of their being relieved or reinforced, and that they were likely to fall into the hands of the raiders if they continued where they were So they decided to withdraw from Skardu as best as they could after experiencing six full months of the siege. Thapa reported this to Thimayya, but was sternly ordered to hold on and not to withdraw without prior permission The siege continued.

On 7 August, Indian Tempests again attacked the enemy positions and dropped two containers of supplies for the garrison. But when the excitement of their appearance was over, the situation remained basically the same. The enemy kept on doggedly sniping and shelling the fort. Then, on 9 August, deeper booms were heard above the bursting of the mortar bombs. The attackers were using two 3 7-inch howitzers against the fort. The shelling was intense, but the strong bunkers stood up well and only one man of the garrison was wounded. The mortars and howitzers kept on firing sullenly the next day also, and resumed shelling on 12 August This time the bombardment began in the evening, and was concentrated on one picquet alone The shelling was followed by a determined assault on the picquet by about two hundred men Their first rush carried them almost on to the bunkers, and savage hand to hand fighting took place. Hand grenades were used by either side, and the battle continued for four hours It ended with the repulse of the attackers once again, with many of their number left dead around the picquet. This was the last success of the Skardu garrison—the end was near.

During the intense fighting, the picquet ran short of rifle ammunition, and a fresh box of it had to be rushed there from the fort This was the last box of ammunition left in reserve. After the battle, it was found that there remained only 10 cartridges with each rifleman. It was not enough even to fight one more battle. The end had come.

Let us draw a veil over the scene on 13 August The siege had lasted over six months The civilian refugees, men, women, and children, had cheerfully endured all the dangers and privations of the long siege, and knew what was in store for them. The men had fought like heroes, and now the time had come to meet their fate with calm resignation. Their commander still exhorted them to fight on, but even he could hold out no hope of final success. When night came, the staunch men who had withstood so many stormy attacks, quietly slipped out of the fort in twos and threes, preferring to gamble their lives outside rather than wait patiently for the inevitable. When the grey dawn broke on 14 August, the fort was held only by Lieut-Colonel Thapa with four of his officers,

one Junior Commissioned Officer and 35 Other Ranks The refugees lay huddled in their corner Thapa sent off his last signal to General Thimayya at 0800 hours

Skardu capitulated that day [12]

CONCLUSION

The operations described above represented the high tide of Pakistan's successes Within a period of about eight months and with only about two battalions of troops, the invaders had occupied a vast and strategic region, from Gilgit to the Nubra, and from the Karakoram to the Zoji La and Gurais As a result of these successes, the line of communication to Leh was cut, and the Kashmir Valley itself was surrounded from the north and east also From the west and south-west the raiders were already threatening the Valley

In evaluating the lessons of these operations, the foremost place must be given to the importance of superior leadership Skardu commanded by an able and staunch leader, held out for six months against overwhelming odds, and defied all assaults to the end The boldness of conception and skill in execution of the invaders' right hook against Dras and Kargil also compel admiration On the other hand, the unsound tactical dispositions of the Indian officers in that sector must be held primarily responsible for the destruction of their strong forces and the fall of Skardu Headquarters 163 Brigade repeatedly told the column commanders to picquet the heights along the route, to advance on either bank of the river, and patrol vigorously But detailed instructions over the wireless could not take the place of tactical skill on the ground These operations emphasised once again the crucial importance of selecting bold and skilful officers for isolated and distant operations where neither effective control from the superior formation nor replacement by another officer is practicable

These operations also proved that the Indian troops, whether the State Force men at Skardu or regular troops at Machhoi, were immensely superior to the enemy in stamina, scientific training and 'fire discipline' The garrison of Skardu and men of 1 Patiala at Gumri and Machhoi smashed every attack launched against them The siting of their medium machine guns proved excellent and their 3-inch mortars were the most effective and dreaded weapon in all these operations The invaders, on the other hand, were excellent in open manoeuvring and in laying ambushes The destruction of the Indian columns in ambushes near Parkutta, and the manner in which they outflanked and neutralised the carefully sited picquets at Gumri and Machhoi showed that the invaders had innate tactical sense and an eye for the ground Surprise attack was their 'forte', but they were incapable of carrying home a prepared attack against determined opposition It is remarkable that, with all their superiority in numbers and fire-power, they never succeeded in taking even one picquet by assault. Even the tiny garrison

of Dras defied them for almost a month, and they entered the place only after the defenders had evacuated it

Finally, these operations brought out once again the vital importance of air support in modern war. In morale alone, strafing and rocket sorties gave dividends out of all proportion to the effort. The RIAF gave valuable support to the gallant defenders of Skardu But it could not supply them even with their modest requirements in full. Judged by modern standards of the major powers, the RIAF was a pitifully small force and admittedly, it had to distribute its efforts between the various sectors of the front, from Punch to Leh By its wonderful exploits at Punch and Leh, the RIAF had set itself a standard of performance which unfortunately could not be maintained at Skardu.

The operations described in this chapter created several urgent problems for the Indian High Command In preparation for their attack on Kargil, the raiders had occupied Gurais in strength and had made their appearance even at Tragbal across the Rajdiangan Pass. This threat to the Kashmir Valley from the north could not be allowed to remain Operations, in fact, had already taken place to recapture Gurais, and to these operations let us turn

Notes

1 Srinagar to Kargil was 200 km, of which only the first 60 km (up to Gund) was motorable (in Feb 1948) Kargil to Skardu was 136 km, Kargil to Leh was 184 km in the opposite direction All these distances are approximate
2 Sometime later, the raiders' headquarters in Rondhu was attacked successfully by a section of two Tempest planes
3 Ehsan Ali and Babar Khan had received promotions, obviously, from their earlier ranks of Captain and Sub-Maj respectively
4 He also gave out that the Governor of Gilgit and Lt-Col Abdul Majid Khan were prisoners at Gilgit and Captain Baldev Singh, Captain Sukhdev Singh and Lt Raghunath Singh of the State Forces garrison at Bunji were in prison at Bunji with the survivors of their garrison Gilgit, he said, was linked to Pakistan by frequent Dakota service
5 Account given by Brig Faqir Singh
6 Raiders used one 2-inch mortar, one 3-inch mortar, 2 medium machine guns and 3 Bren guns The locals assisted them by rolling down boulders from the hill-tops
7 The account of the raiders' plans and movements had been taken from an article entitled "End of India's Z Bde", which appeared in a Pakistan newspaper in 1948 It bears internal evidence of authenticity and appears to have been written by a well informed correspondent intimately familiar with the operations he was describing
8 According to the account published in the Pakistan newspaper, the troops were playing a Polo match when the attack came

9 Another version says that Lt-Col S B. Singh was near Kharal bridge, 8 km north of Kargil, when the raiders attacked on 10 May He and his men tried to recapture the bridge and advance to Kargil, but could not After a whole day of fighting, he retired to Olthingthang near Marol, where he was joined by Coutts with 1 platoon of Gorkhas On 13 May, 3 sections had crossed over to north bank of the Suru when raiders attacked Confused fighting took place and in the dark the raiders broke through the position Survivors, including the two officers swam the Indus and 1 VCO, 14 ORs and 2 civilian signallers were lost Rest reached Leh on 18 May

10 To support the tottering front and to recapture Kargil, Sri Div tried another plan On 20 May, 1 Indian Grenadiers was told to capture Gurais and to advance upto Burzil Pass to cut the main L of C of the raiders who had captured Kargil At the same time, 1 Patiala was ordered to concentrate at Zoji La to advance to Dras and Kargil But nothing came out of these hurried plans

11 According to Lt-Col Kripal Singh, one company of his 5 K I, was still detained at Srinagar, doing Station Duty!

12 After the capitulation, many officers and men of the garrison were murdered in cold blood, together with most of the refugees The women were saved for a worse fate Lieut-Colonel Thapa was taken away a prisoner

CHAPTER XVI

The Gurais Sector

TOPOGRAPHY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Gurais sector was primarily the upper valley of the Kishanganga river due north of Srinagar The Kishanganga was formed of two major streams, namely, the Tilel coming from the east and the Burzil coming from the north These two streams met near Gurais or Dawar, and flowed on in a westerly direction, finally turning south to join the Jhelum near Muzaffarabad. The western portion of the river formed part of the Muzaffarabad and Tithwal sectors; the Gurais sector was limited to the stretch of the river upwards, or eastwards, from Taobat. The valley of the Kishanganga in this sector was a deep gorge flanked on both sides by precipitous cliffs and snow-clad hills To the south a thickly forested range featuring Kisor, Handmangar and Hant peaks separated it from the Wular lake and Srinagar To the north rose the bare rocky cliffs of Anzbari and Durmat, while hidden behind them lay the main Himalayan Range culminating in the giant Nanga Parbat The western end of Gurais valley was at Bagtor, where the Losar and Naushahra ridges came from the south and forced the river to turn north to skirt them. In the east, the valley was closed in by the main Himalayan Range, across which lay Dras and the ancient caravan route from Srinagar to Leh

Gurais proper was merely a small village set in the middle of a level and fertile plain on the left (i e. south) bank of the Kishanganga This level plain was no more than 3 km wide and some 13 km long But, to the weary traveller wending his way from Gilgit to Srinagar through that wilderness of snowy hills and barren plateaus, Gurais must have looked like an oasis in a desert Its level plain and rich green fields and clear, deep blue stream were enough to gladden the heart. It was also a sportsman's paradise, for the high mountains in the north held Ibex and Snow Leopard, the forested slopes to the south were the home of the Barasingha Stag and the Musk Deer, while real Trout abounded in the stream Moreover, the place had a post office, a police station and a comfortable rest house and "Inspection Bungalow " For, Gurais was an important point on the communication system of the State. From Srinagar the Gilgit road ran beside the Wular Lake to Bandipur, climbed about 1220 metres to Tragbal, another 915 metres to the Rajdiangan Pass, and then down the other side to Kanzalwan and along the Kishanganga to Gurais From Gurais the road crossed the river by a wooden bridge, went past Minimarg and over the Burzil Pass and down the Astor river and so on to the Indus valley and Gilgit Gurais could also be approached from Muzaffarabad and the Punjab up along the

gorge of the Kishanganga. Finally, rough tracks led eastwards from Gurais to Kashpat and Baodab and then southwards over the hills to Sonamarg or eastwards over the hills to the Muski *Nala* and Dras.

Gurais was thus a key to several doors, a place of considerable strategic importance

HOSTILE INFILTRATION IN THE AREA

The raiders penetrated into the Gurais area soon after their invasion of the Kashmir Valley in October 1947. Exact details are not available, but the fall of Muzaffarabad on 22 October opened the Kishanganga gorge route to the raiders' war parties, and they also crossed over to Gurais from the Kupwara valley After Baramula and Pattan fell into tribal hands in the early days of the invasion, some raiding parties went north, rounded the Wular lake and entered Bandipur.[1] They sacked the house of a local nationalist leader, 'Jail Baba', and plundered several other well-to-do households. When the invasion was beaten back a few days later, and Baramula recaptured by Indian troops, the raiders at Bandipur found their route blocked, and so retreated north via Tragbal and Rajdiangan (or Rajdhani) Pass into the Gurais valley. Moreover, the treachery in Gilgit on 1 November 1947, by which that vital area fell into the hands of the raiders, laid open the Burzil route also for hostile incursions into Gurais. The Indian forces in that first winter of the Kashmir operations were completely occupied with critical battles around Uri, Punch, Rajauri etc . and were too thin on the ground to be able to devote any attention to Gurais. The track over the Rajdhani Pass was also closed, as usual, by heavy snowfall about the end of November, thus sealing off the Kishanganga valley from the south.

With spring came brisk preparations by both sides for the struggle in the Gurais sector. The raiders received fresh reinforcements from Gilgit On the Indian side, Tactical HQ or more correctly "Battalion Recce Group", and two companies of 2nd Battalion, the Bihar Regiment, were moved up from Digdol near Ramban to Srinagar on 11 April 1948. The Banihal Pass was still covered with snow, and the convoy was held up near the tunnel for several hours by a snow slide, but the companies reached Srinagar the same night. D company was sent to Bandipur on 15 April. It established a firm base about 6 km north of Bandipur and just across the stream "Madhumati".

On that day, i.e. 15 April 1948, about 300 raiders were reported to be concentrated at and around Tragbal They had 3-inch mortars and LMGs, with which they harassed the Biharis day after day. On the 16th, two 3-inch mortar bombs were fired at the Indian position at Pt. 6115, and the next day a burst of LMG was directed at it On 19 April, reliable information was received that the raiders' strength at Tragbal had swelled to 500, and included deserters from the State Forces and Gilgit Scouts There were also rumours of a reinforcement of 300 Gilgit Scouts

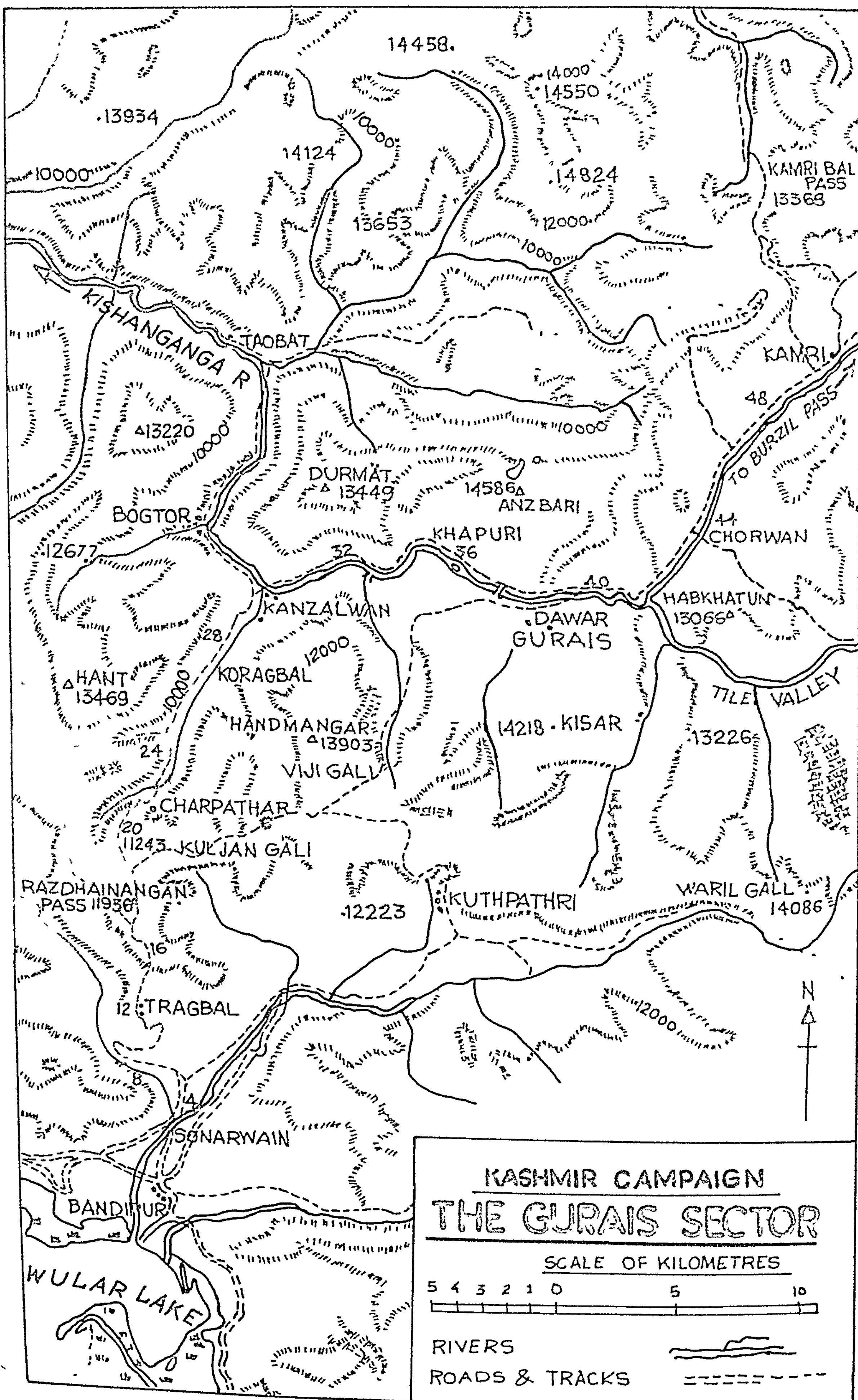
under Major Hassan of the old State Forces with several 3-inch mortars coming to Tragbal This probably referred to the raiders' big plan against Dras and Kargil, described in the previous chapter. Sniping and mortaring also continued, and the raiders destroyed a bridge. Patrols of 2 Bihar were also active, visiting the surrounding country-side and Atthawattu, where they destroyed a bridge as a precaution against enemy infiltration from that direction One of these patrols captured 3 enemy guides on 19 April on the slopes of the hill leading to Tragbal

From the sniping and the information brought back by Indian patrols, the main forward enemy position was located and on 25 April, a strong fighting patrol was sent towards that point. It consisted of four platoons and was commanded by Capt Karnail Singh. The raiders opened fire on it with 3-inch mortars, but Indian artillery and mortars quickly silenced them. The enemy position was captured without great difficulty, and its defenders fled northwards up the hill towards Rajdhani Pass, leaving a fair amount of ammunition and equipment behind them Following this success, the Biharis moved on and occupied Tragbal after an accurate strafing and bombing attack from the air The occupation of Tragbal, a wide shelf of level ground half-way up the mountain, was apparently effected without any serious opposition.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE OFFENSIVE

Early in May 1948, the Biharis were sent back to the Jammu sector, and 1 Indian Grenadiers came up D company of the battalion reached Sonarwain on 4 May, and was joined there by C company the next day. On 6 May, C company reached Tragbal and completed taking over the forward positions from 2 Bihar. When A company and B company of the Grenadiers reached Bandipur area on 14 May and 15 May, the whole battalion was at last concentrated for the coming operation

Arrived at the scene of operations, the Grenadiers faced novel difficulties Although they had the honour to belong to one of the 'elite' units of the Indian Army, they were unused to the problems before them. They had been trained primarily as 'Tank support' unit, and till then had seen very little actual fighting The battalion had been operating in the Jammu area so far, where the terrain and climate were vastly different Tragbal was still covered with snow, and above it lay a region of almost perpetual snow Their sector was over 16 km wide, and full of ravines, thick forests and numerous tracks open to infiltration by the enemy Sonarwain was the limit of the jeep road, although the engineers were working feverishly to hew out a jeep track up to Tragbal by manual labour Supplies, therefore, had to be carried on mules beyond Sonarwain, for which 50 mules and their drivers were hired locally This added to the difficulties of maintaining secrecy about the operations The 'security' problem was already a headache, for the villagers moved freely between Bandipur and Gurais over the little known goat tracks, disseminating information and rumours on either side.



KASHMIR CAMPAIGN
THE GURAIS SECTOR
SCALE OF KILOMETRES
5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10
RIVERS
ROADS & TRACKS
14458
13934
10000
14124
10000
14000
14550
14824
12000
10000
13653
KAMRI BAL PASS 13368
KISHANGANGA R
TAOBAT
KAMRI
48
TO BURZIL PASS
13220
10000
DURMAT 13449
14586
ANZ BARI
BOGTOR
12677
KHAPURI
32
36
44
CHORWAN
40
HABKHATUN 13066
KANZALWAN
DAWAR
GURAIS
28
12000
HANT 13469
KORAGBAL
10000
TILE VALLEY
HANDMANGAR
13903
14218
KISAR
13226
24
VIJI GALI
CHARPATHAR
20
11243
KULJAN GALI
RAZDHAINANGAN PASS 11936
12223
KUTHPATHRI
WARIL GALI
14086
16
12
TRAGBAL
12000
N
8
4
SONARWAIN
BANDIPUR
WULAR LAKE

To overcome these difficulties, Lieut-Colonel Rajendra Singh, the Officer Commanding 1 Indian Grenadiers, took vigorous steps. A programme of intensive patrolling was laid down to make the men really "hill-fit" and to familiarise them with the ground. Platoons were made administratively self-contained for a period of seven days, during which they could operate independently Platoons manning the forward picquets were changed frequently, in order to give the men plenty of practice in hill-climbing. The results of this soon became apparent. Whereas in the beginning the men took about four hours to climb the 1220 metres (in 10 km) to Tragbal, after three weeks they did it in just over an hour. To maintain secrecy and to confuse the enemy, officers of the battalion started using false names over the telephone—usually the name of their opposite number in the enemy force The wireless was used as little as possible, partly to maintain security and partly because of the heavy atmospherics of the hills which interfered with the reception of the wireless sets.

The stocking of Tragbal by mule convoys meanwhile proceeded at a fast pace Then the engineers working on the jeep track completed their task, and the first jeep was driven up to Tragbal on 21 May. On 23 May Tac HQ of 1 Indian Grenadiers was established at Tragbal.

The other side was no less active in its preparations for the coming operations. After losing Tragbal, the raiders reorganised their forces in the Gurais sector. The area was put under the command of Colonel Aslam Pasha, a renegade officer of the old State Forces. His headquarters was at Chilam Chowki According to reports he had under him a force of about three battalions, including about 300 men of the Gilgit Scouts commanded by Major Hassan. These troops could not be compared to the Indian Army in training or discipline, but were adequately supplied with LMGs, MMGs, and 3-inch mortars, and had two 4 2-inch mortars also. For transport, they freely resorted to forced labour, and commandeered every local mule and man till their needs were met And they had an advantage over the Indian Grenadiers in knowing the terrain intimately and being quite at home among the ice slopes and the rarified air of those mountains

From the middle of May 1948, rumours began to circulate about the impending enemy attack on Bandipur. Other reports indicated that Aslam Pasha was trying to send small parties of his men up the Tilel valley to cut the vital line of communication to Skardu at Sonamarg or Gumri.

To forestall such designs and with a view to the eventual recapture of Gurais, the Grenadiers then received orders to capture and consolidate the Rajdhani Pass. In his 'Appreciation' dated 24 May 1948, Lieut-Colonel Rajendra Singh mentioned that the pass was still under one and a half metres of snow. Neither side had any occupied position near the pass, though patrols from both used to visit it. The Indian Grenadiers had their Battalion Headquarters and two companies at Tragbal, one company

less one platoon at Atthawattu and one platoon and the Administrative company at Bandipur The raiders in that area were disposed as follows.

One platoon and one detachment mortars at Pt 7645 to block the Kanzalwan route;

Fifteen men at Pt 8048,

One platoon (40 men) with one detachment mortars at Malak Kadal to watch the Dodakbatun track,

Two platoons and one detachment mortars at Khapuri to guard the entrance to Gurais;

HQ, one platoon and one detachment mortars at Badwan,

One platoon and one detachment mortars at Darikhun to watch the Viji Gali route;

One section of 10 men to guard a bridge;

One platoon of 40 men at Dawar as reserve;

One platoon and one section of MMG at a 'fort' to protect the main bridge, and

One platoon of 40 men at Godor to guard their line of communication

These added up to a total of about 400 men, the rest of the raiders in that sector were dispersed further afield The nearest raiders' outpost was at Darikhun, and they used to patrol regularly up to Viji Gali.

On the basis of this appreciation, it was decided that Rajdhani Pass would be occupied by one company of the 1 Indian Grenadiers, supported by mortar detachment, on 26 May It appears, however, that the operation was postponed for some time, due to the shortage of troops

But then an incident happened that forced the commander's hand At Tragbal, the night of 26/27 May was dark and stormy. A bitterly cold wind came down from the snow slopes of Rajdhani Pass and went howling and moaning through the pines There was neither sound nor movement in the Grenadiers' camp. Only the sentries stood watchful and alert at their posts At about 2230 hours, one sentry saw two muffled figures approaching, and challenged them On being discovered, they whipped out something from their clothes, two shots rang out; and the sentry fell wounded By the time others rushed out and reached the place, the two enemy scouts had disappeared in the gloom of the dark forest.

Such affront could not be allowed to pass unnoticed, and the Commander 1 Indian Grenadiers immediately decided to occupy Rajdhani Pass. The pass was accordingly occupied by D company by first light on 27 May, without opposition The Grenadiers were just in time For the enemy, it seems, had also decided to occupy Rajdhani Pass the same day, now that the snow was about to melt away from the ground

On 28 May, one company of raiders was seen digging positions on the hill near Kuljan Gali, and they were all clad in regular battle-dress and had great-coats on Another party of raiders, 150 strong, was

observed on the Kanzalwan track, moving up with a lot of supplies However, when they tried to advance towards the Indian position on top of the pass, and the two MMGs that supported them opened fire, Indian mortars went into action with devastating effect A direct hit was scored on the advance section of the raiders, and enemy supply and ammunition dumps were also plastered At least fifteen raiders were killed in this engagement, and about twenty were wounded, including Major Hassan The enemy made desperate efforts to recover the bodies of his dead comrades, but was beaten back every time Finally, he retired towards Kanzalwan

The same day, 28 May, a party of raiders consisting of 50 men with rifles and LMGs attacked Atthawattu More than 2000 rounds of small arms were fired at the defenders from a range of 900 to 1350 metres, but inflicted no casualties When a strong patrol was sent out by the Grenadiers, the raiders fell back and melted away.

With the capture of Rajdhani Pass by 1 Indian Grenadiers on 27 May, the way was clear for an attack on Gurais proper Indian troops were at the crest of the mountains dividing the Kishanganga valley from the main Kashmir Valley and could look down into the gorge of the Jatkusu *Nala* that led into enemy held territory.

But the next three weeks saw only minor engagements between fighting patrols, interspersed with mortar duels. On 1 June 1948, unconfirmed reports said that 700 raiders were concentrating on the hills around Bandipur The next day an ineffective mortar duel took place between the Indian positions on the Rajdhani Pass and the enemy on Charpathar On 4 June, enemy's 3-inch mortars again fired a few bombs from the Charpathar area, but were silenced by the telling response of the mortars on Rajdhani Pass On 5 June, 7 June and 12 June, enemy parties were seen digging positions in the Rajdhani Pass area, and they frequently fired several hundred rounds of small arms at the Indian positions Since the Grenadiers were well dug-in in their posts, these tiny barrages achieved nothing—except perhaps to prove that the raiders in the sector had no shortage of ammunition

While these minor engagements were taking place, plans and preparations were being finalised by the Grenadiers for the recapture of Gurais Soon after the occupation of Rajdhani Pass, mule convoys started up the mountainside carrying stores for the major offensive It was calculated that a minimum of two weeks would be required to stock up the pass with all the rations, ammunition, and other supplies required for the big push. Since these convoys could not be hidden from the enemy at Charpathar and Kuljan Gali positions, the Grenadiers decided to mislead the enemy by exaggerating their scope With this object in view, the convoys always went up to the pass in broad day-light, but came back at night for more supplies The enemy thus saw an unending stream of mules carrying stores to the pass, which could only mean a very big offensive indeed This knowledge was bound to

affect the morale and nerves of the raw, half-trained levies who formed a good percentage of his troops.

There were two possible routes for an advance from Bandipur to Gurais The first route was part of the well known old caravan road from Srinagar to Gilgit and Central Asia Countless men, horses and mules had travelled along it for centuries, till it became a well-graded, easy mule track From Rajdhani Pass, it went due north, first along a spur of the hill to Charpathar, and then along the left side of the gorge down to Kanzalwan. From Rajdhani Pass to Kanzalwan, the distance was about 19 km From this point (Kanzalwan), Gurais lay to the east, about 16 km up the Kishanganga There was no possible track along the south bank of the Kishanganga, for the high mountains there ended abruptly in perpendicular cliffs and rocky walls that fell straight into the swift-flowing river. The scenery was magnificent, but there was no room at all for a track between the mountain and the river. So the caravan road crossed over to the north bank of the Kishanganga near Kanzalwan, and proceeded along it via Khapuri to Wampor, where it recrossed the Kishanganga by a wooden bridge and then entered Gurais, which was on the south side of the river. There was also a difficult track from Kanzalwan across the densely forested slopes of the hill to Gurais But it was too narrow for a large force and had a number of easily defended positions

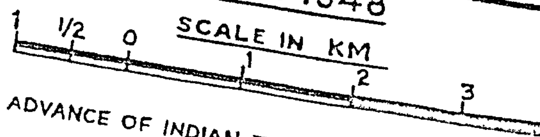
The second route from Rajdhani Pass to Gurais was a mere goat track, unknown to all except the few local Gujars who grazed their hardy sheep and goats on those high mountains From the pass, it went east along the crest of the mountain range For the first 3 km or so, it kept to the north slope of the crest, then crossed over to the south side by a narrow cleft in the rocks, called Kuljan Gali I. Covering another 3 km along the south side, the track ascended a steep slope to the Kuljan Gali II, where it crossed over to the north side again The hill top here was a small level plain along which ran the track, while on either side the hill fell steeply away. From this Kuljan meadow one could see the deep, forest-clad gorge of the Madhumati stream to the south, through which a difficult foot-path climbed up to Kuljan Gali II. Onwards the track led to a steady but stiff climb of over 300 metres to an unnamed pass This pass, the highest point along the track, had an altitude of 3832 metres, and was flanked on either side by hills over 3960 metres high Beyond this pass, the track descended steeply to the broad and level meadow of Viji This meadow was over 3 km long, and had a width of one and a half km On either end of this upland valley were high mountain walls, with the peak of Handmangar to the north-west and of Kisor to the east To the south, the meadow ended in a perpendicular precipice into the gorge of the Madhumati, thus preventing all direct access to the meadow from Sonarwain or Bandipur. To the north-east, the meadow ended at Viji Gali, from where the track went down to the left along a small stream. In the centre of the meadow was a little hut known as the

KASHMIR CAMPAIGN

THE RECAPTURE OF GURAIS

JUNE 1948

SCALE IN KM



ADVANCE OF INDIAN TROOPS

DISPOSITIONS OF ENEMY TROOPS



Viji Bungalow, built to afford shelter to State officials or sportsmen in their 'rare visits to the place.

From Viji Gali, the track went down about 300 metres, crossed a small stream and then went slanting up the side of a hill for about 6 km Then it crossed over the mountain spur by the Darikhun Gali. From Darikhun Gali (about 3350 metres) the Kishanganga appeared almost at one's feet, flowing away far far down in the bottom of the gorge. The green fields of Wampor and Gurais were also visible as a chequer-board of irregular squares. The track then went spinning down the steep side of this small ravine, descending about 1220 metres in 5 km. It finally emerged from the gloomy tangle of trees and bushes in the ravine at Wampor The Kishanganga valley was about 3 km broad there, and the Viji track joined the caravan road before proceeding to Gurais, another 3 km up the river.

To the Indian officers planning the recapture of Gurais, it was, thus, obvious that the caravan road provided by far the easier access to their objective. It was a well-graded, well-maintained mule path, so that supplies could be moved along it relatively quickly and in bulk But it had one fatal weakness If the enemy blew up the Kishanganga bridge at Kanzalwan, the advancing troops would be unable to cross over to the north bank, and progress along the south bank towards Gurais was barred by the rock wall that rose sheer from the river. At this bottleneck, even a dozen determined men could hold up an attacking column indefinitely. The Viji Gali route was unfamiliar, was sure to be difficult, and was impossible for sending supplies. But, on the other hand, it would give the Grenadiers the advantage of surprise, and it should be weakly held by the enemy. The locals said that it would be free of snow after 1 June, and they ought to know Although there had been heavy snowfall at the Rajdhani Pass as late as 11 June, it did not affect the plan. Lt-Col Rajendra Singh selected Viji Gali as the route of the advance, which was given the code name of 'Operation Eraze'.

On 17 June, Major-General K S Thimayya, DSO, the GOC, Sri Div, visited Tragbal and discussed 'Operation Eraze' At the end of the conference, he set 25 June as D day for the advance It was accepted that at least two full strength battalions would be required for the operation Another battalion, therefore, had to be sent up to join the 1 Indian Grenadiers The 2nd Battalion 4th Prince of Wales' Own Gorkha Rifles was selected for this purpose On 20 June, A company of 2/4 GR took over the positions at Atthawattu from B company of 1 Indian Grenadiers. The Tactical Headquarters, B and C companies of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles climbed up to Tragbal on 21 June, and took positions at Rajdhani Pass on 23 June. The Patiala Mountain Battery was also placed under the command of 1 Indian Grenadiers on 22 June. It moved up on 23 June

On 21 June, General Thimayya held another conference at Tragbal to finalise plans and fix all details 25 June was confirmed as D day for

the operation The plan approved was for 2/4 Gorkha Rifles to attack Charpathar on the left on D-1, in order to pin down the enemy and confirm his suspicion that the attack was coming along the Kanzalwan route Then, on D day, 1 Indian Grenadiers was to strike to the right along the Viji Gali track. Air strike was arranged for D-1 and D day, and was to be available on call during the next three days. The mountain guns, of course, would accompany and support the advance.

THE ATTACK BEGINS

On 23 June, two days before D day, 2/4 Gorkha Rifles completed its concentration at Rajdhani Pass, except for two companies, one of which was at Atthawattu and the other at Leh, having been flown there earlier. The section of Patiala Mountain Battery began its 'registration' of targets on the left the same day In order to secure surprise, no gun was allowed to fire towards the Kuljan Gali. Low clouds prevented the RIAF also from taking a hand in these preparations.

The next day, D-1, broke dreary and cold, with fleecy clouds resting on the tops of the mountains. A thin drizzle was falling In spite of the miserable weather, C company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles started its advance towards the village of Dand Behan at 0410 hours, just as dawn was breaking. Soon the enemy opened up on it from a ring of positions across the Bodra *Nala*. But the Gorkhas pushed on and captured the enemy position at Dand Behan without difficulty. They had suffered so far only one casualty, and their booty included one rifle, seven bayonets, 1000 rounds of rifle ammunition and 18 blankets

To keep up the momentum of attack, C company of 1 Indian Grenadiers was then pushed through the Gorkhas at Dand Behan. It succeeded in advancing another 5 km or so, and captured Charpathar. The mountain guns kept up an accurate fire to support the advance, and knocked out at least two enemy MMGs In the afternoon, the clouds lifted a little, enabling the RIAF Tempests to rocket and strafe enemy positions to the right These air strikes were delivered with consummate skill and pin-point accuracy, particularly against Pt. 12897.

This peak, named Menon Hill, was the tactical key to the Kuljan Gali route along which the main attack was to be launched. It was a steep-sided hill commanding a good stretch of the track, and so its early capture was vital to the success of the operation The only practicable approach to this peak was up the southern slope, which was open to the fire of enemy MMGs on a 3690 metres high hill now named 'Shete Hill' The capture of Shete Hill also was essential before the Grenadiers could advance to Kuljan Gali II.[2] It had been decided, therefore, to capture both these hills on D day.

Accordingly, A company of 1 Indian Grenadiers formed up and started moving towards their objective around midnight of 24/25 June As they started, it began raining again The night was pitch dark, and the track incredibly difficult Footing was slippery on the wet rocks,

and below the narrow, tortuous track gaped a deep ravine. But the Grenadiers pushed on at a good pace, went past Kuljan Gali I, and assaulted the hill as dawn broke. The enemy was about one company in strength with MMGs and mortars in position But he was taken completely by surprise. A brief struggle, and the vital 'Menon' peak was in Indian hands, with the raiders fleeing east down the snow covered slope.

Shete Hill too was captured without difficulty. B company of 1 Indian Grenadiers started its advance at 0200 hours under Captain Shete, and was in possession of Shete Hill by 1100 hours on 25 June. The defenders were on the run and were obviously demoralised, so D company under Captain Hira Singh was at once pushed forward. The next tactical feature was Ferris Hill, 3610 metres high [3] D company had to plod through one and a half km of soft snow in full view of the enemy But fortunately, a thick mist blinded the defenders, reducing visibility to a few metres. By 1600 hours D company was on top of Ferris Hill Then suddenly the mist lifted, and D company was subjected to intense MMG fire by the defenders from the pass area. But the Grenadiers hastily dug themselves in on Ferris Hill Tactical Headquarters 1 Indian Grenadiers and the other companies moved up to the foot of Menon Hill, near Kuljan Gali II.

At the same time, a company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles climbed up to this point from Atthawattu. Its move had been intended to assist the Grenadiers' attack on Shete Hill and Menon Hill, but it found the cliffs extremely steep at many places, and reached the top of the mountain after Shete Hill had been captured It was then ordered to hold these two hills while the Grenadiers moved ahead.

The night of 25/26 June was spent in consolidating the ground gained. C company of the 1 Indian Grenadiers, which had pushed towards Kanzalwan on the 24th, was brought back to Kuljan Gali II. The track forward from Kuljan Gali I was steep and dangerous, but the men worked through most of the night pushing and hauling forward the guns of the mountain battery.

26 June broke frosty and clear From their positions at Kuljan Gali II and Ferris Hill, the Grenadiers looked up at the Viji Pass, through which they had to advance that day. Its steep forward slope was covered with snow. The two hills flanking it also had their mantle of white, except where the jagged black rocks pointed skywards. In the clear, rarefied atmosphere, even the MMG posts of the defenders could be pin-pointed.

The commander of 1 Indian Grenadiers decided to attack simultaneously both the flanking peaks that guarded the Viji Pass. C company under Major Ferris was ordered to take the left peak, 3985 metres high, which was now named Sausage Hill. The peak to the right was given the name of Camel Ridge and was to be assaulted by B company under Captain Shete. D company and a detachment of 3-inch

mortars were detailed to support the attack. The mountain guns were still out of range of the Viji Pass But the mortars opened up to support the attack, and at 0800 hours, a lone Tempest of the RIAF came over to rocket and strafe both Camel and Sausage But even this one aircraft proved most valuable by its accurate pin-point attacks on the enemy positions, apart from the inevitable effect of its appearance on the morale of either side. The ground attacks also were pushed up with dash and vigour, with the result that by about 1200 hours, both the flanking hills were captured Viji Pass was securely in the Grenadiers' hands soon after, D company advancing up the slope to the top.

THE ORDEAL AT VIJI

The Grenadiers had then reached the highest point on the Viji Gali track. At that height, 3832 metres, the cold was intense. A bitingly cold wind howled through the pass, freezing the very marrow of the bones of men and mules alike. To crown all their hardships and difficulties, it soon began to snow. The hard frozen snow-flakes, whipped by the merciless gale, drove along swirling and sweeping over the snowy wastes of the mountain slopes The Tactical Headquarters of the battalion, following hard on the heels of the forward companies, ordered D company to advance immediately to the Viji Hut, which would provide at least a token shelter The men slid and slithered down the steep slope from the pass, and cautiously approached the Hut Nothing could be seen in the driving snow beyond a few metres When very near the Hut, D company found signs that it was still occupied Just as the men were preparing to charge the Hut, one of them saw on the snow a steel helmet, which he recognised as belonging to a "Sathee" of the B company. An ugly incident was thus avoided in the nick of time, and D company at once joined men of the B company who had pushed on after capturing Camel Ridge The small bungalow of Viji Hut was crammed to overflowing when Tactical Headquarters of the Grenadiers also came up and took shelter there

The position at 1600 hours on 26 June was as follows:

Tactical Headquarters, D company—near north end of Viji Gali meadow, one platoon B company at the Viji Hut, B company less one platoon on top of Camel Ridge, C company on top of Sausage Hill, A company and the section of Patiala Mountain Battery many kilometres behind, near Shete Hill.

The blizzard continued The wide, snowy expanse of the Viji meadow was now dotted about with black specks where men and animals had dropped dead in the snow. No less than 45 mules were dead within a short time. The muleteers, hired from Bandipur, slipped away in twos and threes.[4] Some escaped towards Bandipur; others fled towards Darikhun Gali. These were picked up by the enemy, who thus learnt full details of the Grenadiers' predicament.

The night of 26/27 June would never be forgotten by 1 Indian

Grenadiers who faced the full fury of arctic weather in the open and covered only with one blanket between two men Huddled together and shivering behind rocky outcrops in the darkness of that storm-lashed bowl in the mountains, the men barely managed to keep their blood circulation going.

27 June brought them no relief The sun was hidden behind leaden clouds, and the wind continued to pierce through their sodden clothes. The outlook was almost hopeless, but the commander ordered the advance to be resumed. C company from Sausage Hill skirted the Viji meadow and moved up to a point just north of it There it came under heavy MMG fire from enemy positions on the ridge above the track to Darikhun Gali. The company, caught on low ground in a narrow valley, could not advance any further About 1400 hours, D company was sent forward from Viji Gali proper, but was pinned down about 900 metres beyond it by accurate and heavy enemy MMG fire from the commanding slopes across the stream

The situation was getting desperate The advance was barred by the defenders in well sited and commanding positions, and supplies and rations were already getting short. No troops could withstand indefinitely the hardships of the arctic weather at that altitude. Something had to be done immediately, otherwise the whole force would be totally lost

But the steep slopes and deep snow had defeated the mules drawing them, and the guns were still at Kuljan Gali II. As a last resort, it was decided to try to get them hauled up by sheer human labour A company which had just arrived near Viji Hut on 27 June was ordered to retrace its steps to Kuljan Gali II and bring the guns as best as it could.

The men of A company patiently trudged back some 10 km in the deep snow, reaching the guns around midnight of 27/28 June Two teams of 20 men each were detailed to pull on two ropes tied to the sides of the guns, and A company started towards Viji Gali again. The night was dark, the track narrow and slippery. Yet the men pushed and pulled the guns through the deep snow and over the steep slopes to the pass and beyond, reaching Viji Hut with their precious cargo at 1600 hours on 28 June They had gone without shelter, rest or sleep and were completely exhausted, but they had assured the success of 'Operation Eraze'.

Meanwhile, the position at Viji was transformed by another feat of endurance and skill On 27 June, it will be remembered, C company and D company were both pinned to the ground just beyond Viji Gali proper. As evening fell, the enemy started moving up round their right flank, and they had to be withdrawn into the Viji meadow. It was still problematical whether A company would be able to drag the guns up to Viji Gali, so Lieut-Colonel Rajendra Singh decided upon a bold and desperate manoeuvre. He ordered B company to outflank the enemy from the right by climbing up the high hills to the east of Viji Gali. There was no time to lose, and B company started on its arduous march

at 2100 hours. They went stumbling and plodding through the snow without guides, with the towering peak of Kisor (4334 metres) as their beacon. They climbed up, then went down and crossed the Gagan *Nala*, then climbed again, higher and higher. When near the peak, they turned north, then west again, recrossed the Gagan *Nala* and climbed up towards Pt. 13295.

GURAIS CAPTURED

At last the Grenadiers' ordeal was over. The dawn of 28 June broke clear and bright, and the men near Viji Hut could see the platoons of B company dotted about high on the spurs of Kisor and Pt. 13295. The enemy saw them too, and knew that the game was up. His strong defensive positions were completely outflanked and commanded by B company.

Then began a race for Darikhun Gali and Gurais. The enemy, however, had a ready-made track to run along, and kept ahead of the pursuit At 0900 hours an air strike was made by the RIAF at Darikhun Gali, which only served to hurry up the fleeing raiders. At 0930 hours, B company was on top of Pt. 13295, and by 1200 hours, Tactical Headquarters itself reached Darikhun Gali The raiders were even then hurriedly withdrawing from Gurais, for at 1336 hours they were observed blowing up the bridge over the Kishanganga. At 2000 hours, A company under Major Menon, and accompanied by Major S.S Maitra, the second-in-command of the battalion, left Darikhun Gali and went spinning down the steep and bush-chocked ravine towards Wampor. They entered Gurais at 0400 hours on 29 June, all the raiders having fled hurriedly across the river

Meanwhile the 2/4 Gorkha Rifles had captured Kanzalwan. As already related, the Gorkhas had drawn back to Charpathar after the success of their feint attack on 24 June. As the Grenadiers continued to penetrate deeper along the Viji Gali track, the Gorkhas maintained constant patrolling forward from Charpathar. On 28 June, the hostiles were discovered in full retreat, on which B and C companies advanced and captured Kanzalwan by 2030 hours The next morning, patrols of the Gorkhas and the Grenadiers met on the track and exchanged information about the capture of Gurais as well as Kanzalwan.

'Operation Eraze' was over, and Gurais was once more in Indian hands

ENEMY RIPOSTE AT KANZALWAN

During the next few days after the capture of Gurais, the Grenadiers were busy in consolidating their hold on the area conquered. Patrols were thrown out across the river to harass the enemy and to establish picquets on the commanding heights of Anzbari. On 2 July, Achura was occupied without opposition and patrols began to probe up the valley of the Burzil *Nala*. The next day, a patrol entered Chorwan and collected several boxes of 3-inch and 2-inch mortar ammunition, telephone

equipment and some other stores left behind by the retreating enemy. The South bank of the Kishanganga was free of the raiders by then, but their bunkers and patrols were observed just north of Khapuri, at Dudgai and behind the Habkhatun hill. By 10 July, the Grenadiers patrols had penetrated to Pt. 13082 where they laid booby traps, and had occupied Pt. 12541, thus securing both the flanks of the rock peak of Anzbari. On 15 July, the bridge near Gurais, which had been blown up by the enemy during his retreat, was ready after repairs.

During the next week, the enemy seemed to recover his balance after the shock of operation 'Eraze,' and the position was stabilised. Well constructed and fully manned enemy bunkers were reported at Pt. 13293 on the left and Pt. 12909 on the right of the Burzil *Nala,* while in the gorge itself, the no-man's land ran through the S & T Godown and bridge. Frequent exchanges of LMG, MMG and mortar fire took place in which the honours generally went to the better-trained Indian troops The sides were evenly matched, for to the mountain guns of the Patiala Battery the enemy replied with his 4 2-inch mortars.

The Gorkhas also were consolidating their hold on Kanzalwan sector. Tactical Headquarters and A company remained at Rajdhani Pass, but B and C companies were near Kanzalwan, on the west side of the Koragbal *Nala.* With the help of a party of engineers, work was taken in hand to improve the mule track to Kanzalwan and Gurais. At first it was assumed that, due to their severe defeat at Gurais, the hostiles had cleared out of the valley of the Kishanganga down to Folowai and beyond Patrols reported no enemy seen for many kilometres around Everything appeared so peaceful indeed that the battalion was ordered to demolish all bridges on the Kishanganga between Kanzalwan and Kel, a stretch of about 80 km. On the morning of 7 July, therefore, a party of three sappers escorted by one platoon of B company set out from Kanzalwan towards distant Kel It had gone only some 16 km when, near Taobat, it was fired upon by a strong enemy force with MMGs, LMGs and mortars In an instant the local coolies had thrown away their loads and disappeared, while the surprised Gorkhas hastily made their best way back to Kanzalwan At this rude shock the order to demolish bridges up to Kel was withdrawn and a warning order for the Gorkhas to go back to Bandipur on conclusion of operation 'Eraze' was also cancelled. Vigorous patrolling was resumed, A company manned a picquet at Pt. 12229 while patrols ranged as far out as Pt. 13469, Pt. 12520, Pt 12677 and Bagtor, without seeing any signs of the enemy.

In the evening of 22 July, however, strong rumours began circulating among the local villagers that a strong party of the raiders had arrived at Bagtor that day. The next morning a patrol was sent out under Lieut Kamlal to Bagtor. It hurried back to report strong enemy positions. The full extent of the danger was not yet realised by the Gorkhas near Kanzalwan, but, as a precautionary measure, two sections

west towards Bagtor. But the enemy had had enough, and no raiders were encountered.

Thus ended the enemy's bold attempt to capture Kanzalwan again With the failure of this attempt, the raiders gave up all hopes of re-occupying Gurais Thenceforth they contented themselves by blocking the Burzil Pass leading towards Chilam Chowki and Skardu, where the situation was far more favourable to them.

CONCLUSION

The operations described above plugged up the breach in the northern defences of the Kashmir Valley. Before these operations started, the raiders had occupied the entire valley of the Kishanganga and had advanced up to Tragbal overlooking the Wular Lake But 1 Indian Grenadiers pushed them back across the mountain and with the help of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles, conquered Gurais Their advance through the Viji Gali was a saga of the human will opposed to the stupendous mountains and arctic weather, and its brilliant success exemplified the 'Strategy of Indirect Approach' propounded by modern military theorists [6] At the conclusion of these operations, the enemy had been pushed back from positions of great defensive potential after suffering appreciable losses, and the danger to the Kashmir Valley from the north was eliminated. In the east, however, the raiders had pushed up to Zoji La, and captured Dras and Kargil, as already related. Before these places could be recaptured, the Indian troops were called upon to defend Leh, against which the raiders were operating since May. It will be convenient to describe the defence of Leh before turning to the brilliant thrust from the Zoji La to Kargil, which ended the operations in the Northern Sector of the Kashmir Campaign

Notes

1 On the oral testimony of 'Jail Baba' of Bandipur, as given to the author at Baramula in September 1954
2 These two peaks were named after Major Menon and Capt Shete, the company commanders of A and B companies respectively, and these companies had been given the task of capturing these objectives
3 According to the plan, this feature was to be the objective of C company under Major Ferris, but, since C company was still on the Charpathar side, D company was sent up to capture it
4 In the end only two locals stayed on with the Grenadiers One of these two was Guffara, a staunch nationalist and valuable man
5 D company of the battalion, as mentioned earlier, was at Leh
6 See Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach, Decisive Wars of the World*, etc

CHAPTER XVII

The Defence of Leh

(February–December 1948)

TOPOGRAPHY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The eastern half of the Northern Front of the Kashmir Operations was dominated by Leh, the headquarters of the vast district of Ladakh It stretched from Kargil to the Tibetan boundary beyond Chushul, and from the Himalayan Range to the Karakoram and the Sinkiang frontier. This region was a huge mass of mountains, dissected by the narrow valleys of icy rivers. In the north, the Shyok separated the Karakoram Range from the Ladakh Range, which was bounded in the south by the main Indus valley. South of the Indus valley rose the mountains of the Zaskar Range, backed by the main Himalayan Range All these ranges and valleys ran mainly east to west, which, therefore, represented the grain of the country.

But there were a number of tributary streams which flowed in a north-south direction. Most important of these were the Zaskar, the Suru and the Nubra streams. The headwaters of the Zaskar drained the northern slopes of the Himalayan Range across from Chamba and Lahul; the river then broke through the Zaskar Range to fall into the Indus some distance below Leh The entire catchment area of the Zaskar was a desolate tangle of high mountains and snowy slopes, where the only signs of life were wandering nomads and their herds of sheep and yak. Permanent villages were practically non-existent. The valley of the Suru was, comparatively speaking, fertile and well-peopled, particularly in its lower reaches around Kargil The Suru flowed behind the Himalayan Range opposite Pahalgam, and joined the Indus at Marol. The Nubra was born in the giant glaciers of the Karakoram and joined the Shyok after only a short run. But its valley was fertile and had a number of prosperous villages And through it passed the summer road from Leh to Yarkand and Kashgar

Leh was indeed the hub of the communication system of the region. To it came caravans from Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang or Xinjiang) over the Karakoram Pass, down the Shyok valley, and across the Ladakh Range. The Ladakh Range was crossed by several high passes, of which the most important were Chang La (5598 metres), Digar La (5456 metres) and Khardung La (5602 metres) on the road to Sinkiang (Xinjiang): and Lasirmou La (5150 metres), Chorbat La (4785 metres) and Gansa La (5030 metres) on the route to lower Shyok valley and Skardu. Eastwards from Leh, tracks went along the Indus and over a few passes to Tibet. Another major route linked Leh to Manali in the Kulu valley, via the Taglang La (5328 metres), Baralacha La (4890

metres) and Rohtang Pass To the west, the Shyok valley provided a route direct to Skardu The main caravan route ran from Leh along the Indus valley to Khalatse, then over the Fotu La (4093 metres) and Niamika La (3658 metres) to Kargil. A subsidiary route hugged the Indus gorge all the way down to Marol, from where one could continue onwards to Skardu and Gilgit or turn left to Kargil. The section of the route between Kargil and Srinagar, via Dras and the Zoji La, has already been described in a previous chapter. Srinagar to Kargil was about 200 km; Kargil to Leh about 176 km; Leh to Manali was approximately 400 km, Leh to Yarkand was well over 720 km And all these routes, without exception, were difficult and somewhat dangerous even during the summer and autumn months. Yaks, ponies or coolies were the only transport on these routes. The entire region had never seen a motor car or an aeroplane before 1948, and the telegraph line represented the highest achievement of modern science in Ladakh. This telegraph line joined Leh to Srinagar via Kargil and Dras.

Leh town was situated on a broad sandy plain, about 8 km north of the Indus On three sides of it rose the bare cliffs and rocky slopes of the Ladakh Range, with its mantle of eternal snow Rainfall averaged only a few centimetres in the year, and the air was dry, and astonishingly clear The soil was fertile, though light and sandy, and lovely orchards flourished wherever irrigation could be provided. The town, situated at an altitude of 3358 metres, had little channels of clear and ice-cold water running through it, and its drab-coloured mud-walled, flat-roofed houses stood out sharply against the fantastic rocks and the deep blue sky above them The population was predominantly Buddhist. This was generally true of the whole of the region eastwards from Mulbekh or Bod Kharbu. The women were straight-limbed and comely, fair in complexion and with rosy cheeks The men were simple and honest, expert mountaineers but generally meek and gentle instead of haughty and warlike The numerous monasteries dominated the scenery as well as social life—Ladakh was a quaint and lovely backwater which modern progress had left behind untouched in its hurry

WAR COMES TO LADAKH

War came as a bewildering and unwelcome stranger to this land of the 'Mani Walls' and rocky solitudes. The Buddhist populace hated violence, and the government too had made no preparations After the departure of Lieut-Colonel Sher Jung Thapa for Skardu in November 1947, it appears that only 33 men of the State Forces were left at Leh. This platoon was responsible for defending a region many thousands of square kilometres in area, containing monasteries which were rumoured to hold fabulous riches. Its population was non-Muslim and unwarlike. By attacking Ladakh, therefore, the raiders could obtain wealth and women, and destroy "Kafirs", all without serious fighting These facts were sure to attract them irresistibly, and the people both in Ladakh and

Kashmir immediately appreciated it. For the moment, Leh was sheltering behind Kargil and Skardu, but Kargil could be by-passed and Skardu could not be expected to hold up the raiders from Gilgit for long.

As early as 16 January 1948, therefore, Brigadier L.P. Sen, Commander 161 Infantry Brigade, informed HQ Jammu and Kashmir Force that he proposed sending a small detachment of troops to Leh. In 2 Dogra, there were a few officers and men belonging to the Lahul district and Buddhists by faith. They were used to the mountains, were familiar with local conditions in Ladakh, knew the language, and were very keen to go to Leh. So he wanted to send them 'to raise, organise and train local militias' there The proposal was approved and some men were selected to go to Leh. Before they could start, news came of the raiders' attack on Skardu on 11 February. The news created a panic in Leh, and the Officer Commanding the detachment there sent a frantic telegram to the Kashmir Premier. The telegram emphasised the virtual certainty of their being killed, the treasury and ammunition looted and the people massacred by the raiders, unless the detachment was permitted 'to move to a place out of reach of the enemy.' It added that the desperate situation could be saved only if at least one thousand troops were immediately flown over to Leh

This revelation of the state of morale at Leh underlined the necessity and urgency of sending a more capable officer to Leh. Accordingly, on 16 February a small column set out from Srinagar for Leh. It was composed of 2 officers, 1 Viceroy's Commissioned Officer, 2 Non Commissioned Officers and 11 Other Ranks of the Indian Army and 1 officer, 2 Viceroy's Commissioned Officers and 56 Other Ranks of the State Force, led by Major Prithi Chand of 2 Dogra.

On 17 February, the commander of Leh sent another telegram, saying that the raiders were reported to be advancing towards the Nubra valley, and repeating his request for urgent reinforcements by air. A landing ground was being hurriedly prepared at Leh, and on 18 February, it was claimed to be ready T shaped, it had runways only 365 metres and 305 metres long, on which it was impossible for any Dakota to land. The commander also requested permission to move the Treasury at Leh, containing about 3 lakhs of rupees, into the fort. This permission was granted and, at the same time, Leh garrison was placed under the operational command of Z Brigade from 25 February 1948.

Major Prithi Chand's little column was then still battling its way forward through the snow drifts on the Zoji La route. The winter was at its worst, and the men dragged themselves painfully, foot by weary foot, through the waist high snow and icy winds, towards their distant goal. At times they were brought completely to a standstill by terrible blizzards—but never for long. It was a saga of high courage and tenacity in the face of tremendous dangers and difficulties. But the indomitable

will conquered all obstacles and the little band of Indian Army men entered Leh on 8 March 1948. The State Force detachment following them arrived a few days later. The local populace gave them a tremendous welcome. It was then nearly a month since the attack on Skardu, and the raiders were still far from Leh. The first unreasoning panic had subsided at Leh, and Major Prithi Chand briskly set about his task of raising and training a militia of the local villagers.

The remainder of the month of March went by without any notable incident. Enrolment and training of the local volunteers proceeded, though the lack of warlike traditions among the Ladakhi peasants made the progress very slow. Even up to the middle of May, it seems only 129 men were ready in the militia.

Major Prithi Chand, the new commander of Leh garrison, sent out a small detachment across the Ladakh Range to the Shyok valley, and began patrolling down the Shyok and Indus valleys. In April, the raiders were nowhere in evidence, and the patrols went up to Biagdangdo on the Shyok and to Dah and Yogma Hanu in the Indus valley, without finding any trace of them. The main route through Mulbekh and Lamayuru was still safe, because Kargil was in Indian hands; but the raiders could try to reach Leh either up the Shyok valley or over the Chorbat La. Their non-appearance at Biagdangdo and Yogma Hanu was, therefore, a relief for the Leh garrison, although it was realised that it was only a temporary immunity and that things might be very different once summer came, and Chorbat La opened, probably about 10 May.

Defensive preparations, therefore, continued briskly at Leh. The runways at the landing ground were lengthened and improved The training of the militia proceeded apace, and on 22 April, 50 of them passed their 'range practice'. More arms and equipment were asked for from Srinagar, including 6 Bren guns, 18 sten guns, 400 rifles, 6 mortars of 2-inch calibre, 55000 rounds of SAA, 150 mortar bombs, and a No. 22 W/T set On 26 April, Captain Badri Singh arrived at Leh with some of these arms and stores.

LEH THREATENED

With the coming of May, 'General Winter' gave notice of leaving the Leh garrison to its own devices The snow was melting and movement became comparatively easier. And on 3 May, reports arrived of the raiders collecting in the Biagdangdo *Nala*, and hiding in some of the Muslim villages in the Shyok valley. That route, of course, was wide open to their advance, since the raiders could enter the Shyok valley from the neighbourhood of Skardu and proceed eastwards without meeting any opposition There were no Indian Army or State Force troops between Skardu and Biagdangdo, and the Rajas of Shigar and Khapalu were actively helping the raiders.

Then the fall of Kargil on 10 May 1948 completely transformed the

situation in favour of the raiders. The line of communication of the Leh garrison was cut, and the raiders could march up on Leh from several directions. They could come through the Shyok valley and over the Khardung La or Lasirmou La, or they could advance along the Indus valley route via Grugurdo and Saspul Gompa, or again, they could follow the track south of the Indus via Bod Kharbu. The raiders could thus converge on Leh from the north, west and south. The garrison at Leh was much too weak in numbers and armaments to offer effective resistance to the raiders. Reinforcements could reach Leh only by the 400 km long mountain track coming from Manali, or by transport planes, which had till then never attempted a landing on an improvised landing ground at over 3350 metres Ancient and battered Dakotas (Mk III) were the only transport planes available, and it was doubtful if they would be able to fly over the high Himalayas to reach Leh at all. The prospect certainly appeared gloomy at Leh

On 11 May, the two platoons blocking the Shyok valley route had a light skirmish with about one battalion of the hostiles near Chumik La, where the track left the gorge of the Shyok and climbed across one of the ridges on the north bank of the river On 14 May, the single platoon defending the vital Khalatse bridge reported the raiders operating in the vicinity, and the next day, news arrived of the capture of Bod Kharbu by the enemy. So it became clear that the raiders were advancing along all the three different routes. But the defenders were too weak to counter these moves.

On 17 May and the following days, Major Coutts, Lieut-Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh and the dispirited remnants of their force staggered into Leh after their rout near Marol. Their story further discouraged the nervous troops and civilians at Leh, and caused some panic.

The situation rapidly deteriorated. In the Shyok valley, the tiny force of two platoons had to fall back to Pachatang on the south bank of the river, leaving the route along the opposite bank open to the raiders. They thus moved on to the Nubra valley The hostiles in the sector appeared trained troops, and used Helio lamps to signal across the ravines. In the Khalatse sector, 500 raiders including some regular Pakistani troops were concentrated near Dah and were armed with 2-inch and 3-inch mortars, medium machine guns and light automatics. Further south across the Indus, the raiders coming from Kargil were sending strong patrols to Lamayuru, which soon left that place behind and pushed on to Wanlah and Drogulika on the southern track On 22 May, the vital bridge at Khalatse was assaulted, with heavy fire from medium machine guns and mortars supporting the attack The weak detachment of State Force troops was thrown back, and most of them melted away into the hills and saw no more of the war. Fortunately, the bridge was destroyed before it could fall into enemy hands [1]

Meanwhile, Major Prithi Chand had been sending urgent requests

The situation was still grave The raiders, unaccountably, still remained where they were, but how long could they be expected to stay immobile? When no reinforcements arrived on 26 May, panic reappeared at Leh. The raiders had roused themselves at last and were advancing slowly from Khalatse along either bank of the Indus The troops had also learnt about the desertion and were naturally down-hearted When on 27 May he learnt that reinforcements could not be expected for another four or five days, Major Prithi Chand sent a strongly worded signal to Headquarters Sri Division. He pointed out that the previous day he had been promised reinforcements by air in two days; but the latest information had put back the date of their arrival by four or five days The troops had lost all confidence in their officers' promises and were ripe for desertion due to their hopelessness "Had no promises been made and forgotten, morale would not have suffered so." Under the circumstances, there was every likelihood of the dispirited troops deserting from Leh, and Major Prithi Chand proposed to pull back the detachment in Nubra to defend Leh itself

This grave message was followed immediately by another from the President of the Buddhist Association at Leh to General Thimayya, saying that the raiders were barely 27 km from Leh. The promises of immediate help had "deceived" people, otherwise they would have fled and saved at least their lives and the honour of their womenfolk Unless troops were sent by air the same day, all would be lost and "no cries of distress will reach your ears from tomorrow."

The situation was extremely critical, but Headquarters Sri Division found it impossible to move troops by air immediately. Perhaps planes were not available and ready on the spot, and not even one company of troops could be spared that day from the important operational commitments at Punch, Tithwal, etc In any case, the weather alone made it impossible to fly over to Leh in the afternoon, as desired by the President of the Buddhist Association, and almost all flights to Leh had to start in the early morning, before clouds could form up and hide the jagged peaks about mid-day

On 28 May, Headquarters Sri Division replied to Headquarters Leh garrison, according permission for the withdrawal of troops from the Nubra sector for the close defence of Leh, and promising reinforcements once again at an early date. The next day, orders were issued to 2/4 Gorkha Rifles near Shulur to send one company to Srinagar to be flown to Leh on 30 May. On the same date, 28 May, a column left Ferozepur for Manali, to march to Leh over the mountains. This column was commanded by Major Hari Chand and was composed of men of D company of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles. Its strength was 2 officers, 4 Gorkha officers and 151 Gorkha Other Ranks, with a section of 3-inch mortars, and a Signal detachment, and it also carried 600 rifles, and 60,000 rounds of SAA for the militia and other troops at Leh. This marching column, however, could not reach Leh for several weeks, and

all hopes were pinned on the flight of the company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles. As ordered, D company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles was relieved at Shulur by C company of 7 Jammu and Kashmir Infantry on 30 May The Gorkha company made up of 2 Viceroy's Commissioned Officers, 4 Non Commissioned Officers and 77 Gorkha Other Ranks, took off at last on the morning of 31 May. The flight consisted of 6 Dakota planes of No 12 Squadron, and was led by Air Commodore Mehar Singh himself. But bad weather over the Himalayan range compelled the planes to turn back after flying halfway through to their destination. The Gorkhas waited impatiently at the Srinagar airfield and again boarded the planes before dawn on 1 June. The perilous flight was thrilling but uneventful, and all the planes landed at Leh without mishap [2] The troops were soon rushed to the 'front' near Saspul Gompa, and stabilised the position. Leh was saved—for the time being.

It appears very likely that the raiders could have captured Leh in the last week of May if they had pressed forward boldly and with full force from Khalatse. But probably their leaders in the area lacked the stern resolution and tactical insight necessary to make the most of their advantage. Or, perhaps, a sizable proportion of them were recalled at the critical time for the heavy fighting in the Zoji La sector, where 1 Patiala was attacking furiously to advance and relieve the besieged garrison of Dras. Whatever the reason, the danger to Leh was averted when all seemed lost.

THE SECOND CRISIS AT LEH

After the arrival of the company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles on 1 June, the garrison of Leh felt strong enough to take some offensive action. On 4 June, a strong hostile patrol was engaged near Khalatse by snipers, who succeeded in killing 1 and wounding 2 of the raiders. By then the invaders had retired west of Khalatse and were reported to be concentrated, 13 km from Khalatse and on the left bank of the Indus, across from Dumkhar. No further news arrived of the hostile column that had been pushing on to Drogulika on the track south of the Indus. In the Shyok valley, the two State Force platoons counter-attacked and moved up from Pachatang to Yaglung south of the river. North of the Shyok, a small militia column, led by Subedar Bhim Chand, moved round along the slopes of the Karakoram and, on 10 June, attacked the raiders' position at Chumik La from the north. The hostiles were taken by surprise and fled after a short, sharp fight, leaving behind 20 of their dead comrades and 5 rifles, with some ammunition. By the middle of June, Dzongpolas was captured by the militia, and the raiders were pushed back to Biagdangdo The momentum of the advance then exhausted itself and the forward positions were stabilised near Biagdangdo in the Shyok and near Dumkhar in the Indus valley.

At the same time, attention was given to the refitting of the troops in Leh and to organising a planned system of supply for them. It was

pointed out by the OC Leh that the State Force troops there had only one pair of socks and one pair of boots, which were completely worn out by the intensive operations in which they had been engaged for many weeks. Fresh supplies of equipment and clothing were urgently wanted for them In reply, Headquarters Sri Division informed him that the State Force troops in Leh were to be treated exactly on par with Indian Army troops for purposes of supply and equipment Fresh supplies of stores and clothing were already on the way to Leh via the Manali route. On 11 June, Headquarters Sri Division also wrote to Headquarters Western Command that on the 2/8 Gorkha Rifles Manali column reaching Leh, there would be approximately one battalion of regular troops there, apart from the militia To maintain them regularly by air might not be possible due to heavy commitments of the RIAF Dakotas elsewhere, and due to the frequent spells of bad weather on the mountains. So the caravan route from Kulu would have to be used for all normal supplies to Leh, and Manali, the motor terminus on this route, should be developed into an Advanced Supply Base. Adequate number of porters and ponies should be organised and located there, so that convoys might move smoothly from there towards Leh. The garrison of Leh was already short of stores and equipment, and it was desirable to assemble and send off the first supply column as early as practicable.

But these confident, long-term plans received a rude shock in the last week of June, and events proved that Leh was not yet out of danger On 26 June, suddenly a body of 600 raiders attacked the forward troops near Dumkhar in the Indus valley The attack was supported by heavy fire from mortars, medium machine guns and light machine guns The few platoons of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles faced the attack with cool courage, and threw it back. At a cost of only one Gorkha casualty, thirty raiders were killed or wounded Among the killed were two officers, who were described as Major Abdul Hamid and Major Agha, but it is not clear whether they belonged to the Gilgit Scouts or the Pakistan Army; they were not State Force deserters. In spite of their success, however, the 2/4 Gorkha Rifles troops withdrew after the battle from Dumkhar to Nurla, a distance of about 24 km The raiders pressed forward after them, and spasmodic attacks continued in the days following. The raiders were numerically far superior, and the ammunition stocks at Leh were getting low again The Officer Commanding, Leh, again signalled Headquarters Sri Division to send 50,000 rounds of SAA, 500 HE bombs for the 3-inch mortars and one battalion or at least three companies of troops as reinforcement, as early as possible

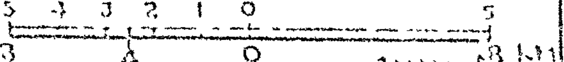
Meanwhile, Major Hari Chand was driving hard his column of D company 2/8 Gorkha Rifles on the difficult track from Manali to Leh As mentioned earlier, the column had left Ferozepur by mechanical transport on 28 May At Manali it left its vehicles behind, put its baggage, stores and the supplies for Leh on mules and porters, and

struck out into the mountains. The high mountain passes were still choked with the winter's snow, but the troops hacked their way through. Passing through Kyelang, on the Chenab, the column crossed over the Baralacha Pass, traversed the icy desolation of Rupshu, and entered Leh on 5 July 1948 [3]

The 2/8 Gorkha Rifles troops were immediately sent up to the forward positions, and joined the company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles at Himis Shukpa The two companies of regular troops represented a stronger force than any seen in Ladakh till then. But on 10 July disaster suddenly overwhelmed it near Himis Shukpa. A large force of raiders crept forward and succeeded in occupying the high slopes overlooking the Gorkha positions Before anything could be done to dislodge them, 3-inch mortar bombs began to burst among the defenders, and machine guns poured forth a murderous fire Confusion seems to have prevailed for some time, during which the local porters broke and fled, leaving the Gorkhas stranded. By then the raiders had surrounded them on all sides. The position was clearly untenable, and the Gorkhas were also, it seems, concerned about the safety of Leh, which was almost at the mercy of the raiders. So the men of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles and 2/8 Gorkha Rifles fell back rapidly, leaving behind them two 3-inch mortars and some ammunition and losing 7 men killed and 5 wounded. The raiders were estimated to have suffered 70 casualties, but the Gorkhas for some time ceased to be an operational force. They straggled into Leh in parties of two and three, and were not reassembled till several days later Several officers, including Major Hari Chand, were missing and were supposed to be dead till they reappeared at Leh[4]

Headquarters Sri Division was informed of this serious setback, and was asked to send immediately one battalion of troops by air. Air attacks were also demanded against the raiders. But, for the moment, Major-General Thimayya was helpless. He had no troops to spare from the heavy fighting going on in Punch, Tithwal and Kanzalwan areas, and he had only 2 Tempest aircraft for close support of all his far-flung sectors He was also taken aback at the sudden deterioration in the situation, and pointed out to Officer Commanding, Leh , that there were two Gorkha companies of the Indian Army, two State Force platoons and 1200 rifles available at Leh for the militia With these forces, it should certainly be possible to hold the raiders if defences of Leh were properly organised and resolutely manned

In reply to this communication, Major Prithi Chand informed Headquarters Sri Division on 12 July that at the moment only 20 regular soldiers and 150 men of the militia were defending Leh, apart from about 200 militia men operating in the Shyok valley under an Indian Army Viceroy's Commissioned Officer. The raiders had pushed forward and were reported at Nimu, only about 30 km from Leh. Help was needed immediately to save Leh. The next day, 13 July, Major Prithi Chand again reported the critical situation and declared that about 1000


THE THREAT TO LEH
JULY - OCTOBER 1948
SCALE OF MILES/KM
5 4 3 2 1 0 5
3 4 0 8 KM
INDIAN FORCES
INDIAN THRUST
INDIAN FORCES - RETREAT
RAIDERS' POSITIONS
RAIDERS' THRUST
PACHATANG
UNMARU
NIMU
KHARPU
YOUMA THARU
YOMA THARU
MONDARI
LAMA'S HOUSE
THOIDS
RUMCHU
TIRICHA
CHAMSHING
KURU
17 SOSA PALAM
CHILING
RUMBAK
URUCH
STAK
SHUSHOT
TIKSE
MOUNTAINS

raiders were massed against Leh and were well supplied with mortars, light automatic weapons and ammunition. The defenders were badly in need of equipment, weapons and even clothing No medical aid was available for them, and the wounded suffered terrible hardships Reinforcements by air were immediately required, and the signal concluded, "Withdrawing if no reply in four hours." The next day, HQ Sri Division informed Leh that help would be sent by air at the earliest moment possible, and ordered the troops to hold on at all costs. These orders were repeated on 16 July, and Major Prithi Chand was instructed to hold Leh airfield to 'the last man and the last round.' He replied acknowledging the order, and saying that he intended to call back the troops in Shyok valley to defend Leh

On 15 July, a highly successful encounter with the raiders took place near Basgo, in which 20 of them were killed without loss to the defenders of Leh. But these little successes did not alter the situation, and by 18 July, the raiders reached near Tharu, only about 13 km from Leh as the crow flies. They were, it seems, advancing across the higher slopes of the Ladakh range, outflanking the defensive positions from the north A small party of the hostiles penetrated to a point only about 6 km from Leh, and looked down at the prize almost within their grasp

Then the raiders were halted finally. The small party on the hill-top overlooking Leh was engaged by mortars and dispersed. The position was stabilised at Tharu also The defenders gained several small successes, and regained their morale. During the night of 18/19 July, a sharp engagement took place between Tharu and Umlih, in which the raiders suffered casualties and lost a 2-inch mortar and some stores. On 19 July, the opposing troops were holding positions as shown below·

Raiders

200 at Nimu Rest House

40 on the hill north of Umlih

Indian troops

55 men on the ridge north-west of Tharu bridge

Tactical Headquarters and 16 men on ridge north-east of Tharu bridge

37 men in the *Nala*

3 picquets, of 1 platoon each, on the hills around the airfield

Shyok valley detachment on its way to Leh over the Khardung La.

Airborne reinforcements were expected at Leh on 19 July, but the weather compelled postponement of the flight at the last moment No plane could in fact reach Leh for several weeks, due to a long spell of monsoon weather. The troops in Leh, in consequence, suffered further hardships They had been fighting continuously for many weeks without rest or relief. Their feet were swollen, their bodies were full of lice, and they were very, very, tired. Ammunition and stores were running short;

medical arrangements were practically non-existent, and the wounded and the sick waited at the airfield for the planes day after day.

But fighting continued. At Tharu, skirmishes took place almost every day. The main body of the raiders remained at Nimu, waiting for some more reinforcements before attacking Leh. On 22 July, Officer Commanding, Leh, reported that his ammunition stocks were sufficient only for one day But, somehow, he carried on

The detachment from Shyok valley arrived at Leh on 23 July It consisted of a platoon of Sikhs, 68 State Force troops and 47 men of the militia With their coming the defence of Leh was further strengthened, although even then only 200 local men had been taken into and trained for the militia.

On 28 July, Officer Commanding, Leh, again pressed Headquarters Sri Division for an early despatch by air of reinforcements and supplies He emphasised that only 2 boxes of mortar bombs remained with him now In reply, HQ Sri Division explained that the planes were ready to take off for Leh, but the foul weather had prevented their flight over the dangerous route to Leh during the previous week or ten days.

The situation remained the same during the first half of August 1948 The resistance of the Leh garrison appeared at its last gasp, but, for some unknown reasons, the raiders did not attack in strength The forward positions of the defenders remained near Tharu.

The fall of Skardu on 14 August revealed vividly the dangers of the situation at Leh It was also clear that the hostile forces released from the siege of Skardu would be rushing to Leh to complete the capture of that vital centre It became, therefore, imperatively necessary to send reinforcements and supplies to Leh as early as possible

Accordingly, a Dakota flew to Leh on 15 August, carrying a medical officer, ammunition and some stores Another flight took place on 19 August, and more supplies, ammunition and stores were landed at Leh The GSO 1 of Headquarters Sri Division and the commander of the Jammu & Kashmir Militia also visited Leh by this plane, to study the situation on the spot and inform the local officers of the plans for sending them massive reinforcements. For, orders had already been issued to 2/8 Gorkha Rifles for going to Leh

FURTHER REINFORCEMENTS TO LEH

2/8 Gorkha Rifles was at Ferozepur when it received orders for the move to Ladakh. One of its companies (D company) was already at Leh, the rest left Ferozepur by rail on 17 August and reached Pathankot the next morning From Pathankot, the Tactical Headquarters, and No. 8 platoon of A company, with a section of 3-inch mortars and a signal detachment, left for Srinagar The party consisted of 3 officers, 3 Junior Commissioned Officers and 58 Gorkha Other Ranks, and was led by Lieut-Colonel H S. Parab, the Commanding Officer of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles. He, with Tac HQ 2/8 GR, was flown to Leh on the morning of

23 August, and assumed charge of the civil administration and command of the troops at Leh at 0900 hours 12 Gorkha troops were flown to Leh with him, and 11 more reached there by another plane that afternoon. Casualties were evacuated by the planes on their return flight The next day, 3 sorties carried 36 troops, and the Dakotas continued ferrying over troops regularly thereafter, except when the weather was too bad for flying. By 30 August, a total of 123 troops comprising A coy 2/8 GR were flown over to Leh, together with ample supplies of stores, equipment, ammunition, wireless sets, etc The troubles and privations of the Leh veterans were over at last.

The remainder of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles was meanwhile moving towards Leh by the overland Manali route This party, called 'Arjun' Column, consisted of B and C companies, a total of about 350 men. Arjun Column reached Manali on 23 August, redistributed its loads on pony and porter basis, and started off towards the Rohtang Pass on the morning of 25 August It marched daily till it arrived at Kyelang on 30 August The troops were allowed two days of well-earned rest there, while the baggage was again sorted out, all the porters were dismissed and some more mules were engaged After an arduous trek across the mountain streams and over the 5200 metres passes, the B and C coys 2/8 Gorkha Rifles arrived at Leh on 18 September. With its arrival the defending forces at Leh swelled to nearly two battalions in operating strength, made up of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles, one company of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles and 7 Jammu & Kashmir Militia

The Arjun Column was followed by a supply column As the land route to Leh through the Zoji La could not be opened, alternative means had to be adopted to stock up Leh. Air lifting was not possible owing to inadequate number of sorties available. There were five passes situated at heights above 3660 metres, including one—Baralacha Pass—4890 metres high, on Manali-Leh route. It was anticipated that this pass would be blocked with snow by 7 October 1948 Hence it was necessary to despatch another land column, which was named 'Chapati' It was a large convoy, requiring 1200 mules to move its loads. Since only half this number of animals was available, the convoy moved in two batches, the mules taking one batch a few stages forward and then returning to pick up the second batch Chapati Column left Manali on 12 and 13 September

At one time during its march, it had been reported that the enemy would intercept the advance of Chapati Column A breakdown of signal communication with the column for a few days, added to the reports referred to above, caused great anxiety among the commanders and staff. Communication with this column was, however, re-established. It was necessary for this column to cross Baralacha Pass on the return journey by 7 October 1948. Therefore, Leh was asked to send another column—named 'Chawal'—to take over supplies from 'Chapati' enroute, at Debring later changed to Lun The transfer took place on

1 October and the two columns returned to their bases of Manali and Leh without any further incident The stores thus reached Leh in October. Colonel Parab, the Officer Commanding, Leh, was warned that air supply and the Manali route would both be stopped by winter from about the middle of October, and so he would have to carry on with the supplies received by then until the supplies started coming again in May 1949

Apart from the major convoy through Manali, Dakotas flew regularly to Leh, bringing urgently needed supplies, and officers on liaison or inspection visits, and carrying back casualties and officers granted leave On 28 October, two 4 2-inch mortars were taken to Leh by air, and two more were to be sent a little later. These heavy mortars proved invaluable for destroying enemy strong-points inaccessible to or out of range of other weapons

THE TIDE TURNS

On 19 August Colonel H S Parab was at Srinagar to receive his instructions from Major-General K S Thimayya, DSO. Thimayya's order was "You will defend Leh at any cost " To enable him to do so, when Col Parab was appointed the Military Governor of Leh he was given extraordinary powers His charter, signed by Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Deputy Prime Minister, read as follows. "In the interest of Public Security and to ensure co-ordination between the Civil and Military authorities Col H S Parab, 2nd Battalion 8th Gorkha Rifles, is appointed Administrator for the district of Ladakh until further orders He shall have complete control over the Civil Administration, both Executive and Judicial, in the District He shall execute all Civil, Revenue and Criminal powers which the Wazir-i-Wazarat of Ladakh has heretofore been exercising

"It is further ordered that no Appeal shall lie to the High Court from or against any order, sentence or decree passed by him under any law for the time being in force.

"He shall further exercise all the powers vested in the Government under the Public Safety Act 2003 or the Jammu & Kashmir Defence Rules (Continuance) Ordinance 2003 or re-enacted under the Emergency Provisions (Re-enactment) Ordinance 2004."

On landing at Leh on 23 August, the Military Governor found the civil situation very unsatisfactory Due to the departure of the British Resident and the absence of the Wazir-i-Wazarat, administration had virtually come to a standstill In spite of the efforts of the Tehsildar, people had started hoarding foodgrains. Refugees had arrived in large numbers and panic prevailed in the city

The Military Governor held a public meeting soon after assuming charge and exhorted the people not to panic or indulge in anti-social activities He also set up a full-fledged Cabinet including a Prime Minister, a Health Minister, a Defence Minister (who looked after Home

Affairs also), a Finance Minister and a Food Minister The local public men and petty officials nominated to these posts worked efficiently as a team and relieved the Military Governor of much of the work of civil administration.

Colonel Parab found the forward positions extending in an arc. Far in the north across the Shyok river, the raiders were at Unmaru. On the near bank of the Shyok, fighting was going on around Kharu The main threat to Leh was from the raiders concentrated at Nimu, about 30 km away The defenders were holding their positions around Tharu, blocking the route to Leh. South of the Indus, the raiders were trying to advance down the track from Sumdah, and were located on the west bank of the Zaskar river. Due to the Ladakh range and the turbulent Indus river, there was no lateral communication between these three sectors. The defenders could switch forces from one sector to another only through Leh, and the raiders similarly had to go round via Saspul Gompa and the Alchi bridge if they wanted to reach Sumdah or Chilling from Nimu Between the raiders in Shyok valley and in Indus valley, communications were even more difficult, and only small parties could cross the towering mountain range by difficult passes

Desultory and indecisive fighting continued in all the three sectors as August drew to a close. Occasional sniping and heavier exchanges of rifle fire took place, without any noticeable effect. Between 28 August and 1 September, the raiders made determined efforts to break through the defenders on either flank of the Leh perimeter arc. In the Shyok valley, they tried to cross the river on 28 August from Mondari village, but were foiled by heavy rifle fire of the 7 Jammu & Kashmir Militia from the opposite bank. About 260 raiders were reported to be in that area, and on 29 August they tried to advance along the south bank towards Kharu. Brisk firing took place, and the attackers were halted, though at one stage the defenders were getting concerned about their dwindling stock of ammunition Then the attack petered out, and both sides reverted to their usual patrolling and sniping for about a week. Heavy fighting broke out again on 10 September when 250 raiders suddenly attacked Kharu The defenders were caught napping and found themselves in danger of being encircled. So they fell back on Spanpuk. The raiders tried to advance again on 16 September, but suffered four casualties and were beaten back near the Rakhura *Nala*. They lost the initiative thereafter, and only patrol actions took place for some three weeks. On 7 October, the militia tried to take the offensive, but its small attacks were thrown back by the raiders in superior numbers The Shyok valley saw little fighting after that, and the stalemate continued till the final rout of the raiders on the Nimu front in the middle of November.

In the Chilling sector, at the southern end of the defensive arc, the raiders tried to cross the Zaskar river at Choksi. They were reported to be having one 3-inch mortar, one 2-inch mortar, one

medium machine gun and two light machine guns, and the defenders asked for one more platoon of troops and an MMG to meet the expected attack. But before any reinforcement could reach there from Leh, the raiders opened their attack on 29 August Fairly heavy fighting went on till 1 September, but all the efforts of the hostiles to cross the river under the protective fire of 3-inch mortars and medium machine guns were beaten back On 2 September, a small party of reinforcements reached there from Leh under a Gorkha Subedar, and from then onwards the sector was again quiet, except for the usual sniping and exchanges of rifle fire

In the main sector between Nimu and Tharu, fighting was confined for many weeks to patrolling and desultory rifle fire With the gradual concentration of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles at Leh, the Military Governor systematically prepared the defences and completed his preparations for driving away the raiders from Ladakh The "Defence Minister" enrolled volunteers and set them to improving the various hill tracks for use by loaded mules A rough but serviceable 'intelligence organisation' was created which kept Leh Brigade informed of the enemy's moves and intentions A rope bridge was thrown across the Indus near Tharu to connect the Chilling positions with the main front Performed entirely by manual labour, this was no small feat. A rationing system for the civil population was also established Plentiful stocks of rations, ammunition and stores were collected A party was sent to Gya, which enrolled 50 of the local villagers in the militia and dug out defensive positions for the Leh garrison to fall back upon in case of a major defeat. The front line positions near Tharu were strengthened and the tactical position was stabilised At the same time, it was decided to form a guerilla band under Major Hari Chand for operating behind the enemy lines Guerilla tactics offered tremendous possibilities in the sparsely populated, mountainous, thinly-held areas of Ladakh The local population was also sympathetic to the Indian troops, and since the raiders were in very small numbers compared to the area occupied by them, deep penetrations behind their lines was expected to be relatively safe as well as profitable

MAJOR HARI CHAND'S COMMANDOS

Accordingly, a guerilla platoon was organised in the beginning of September 1948 Specially selected Gorkha and State Force troops were taken in it, men who could climb high mountains where there were no tracks, who could sleep on the snow in the extreme cold, and could march and fight like supermen Thirty-five such men were led by Major Hari Chand, with a local villager as guide. They carried 3 Bren guns, and grenades; and each man had his personal weapons, 2 hand grenades, 150 rounds of .303 ammunition, a blanket or greatcoat, and 2 days' Emergency Scale rations. The party started on the track to Lasirmou La on horseback at 0955 hours on 6 September. As the track

gradually disappeared, the horses were left behind and the party continued on foot By nightfall, the men were on the upper slopes of the range, only 3 km from the pass There the men spent the night huddled together for warmth, sheltering behind some large rocks to escape the piercing wind that seemed to freeze their very blood. The contents of their water-bottles were frozen into solid ice

The march continued the next day at 0500 hours, and the men reached the top of the pass in two hours Marching off again in the afternoon, the guerillas found themselves that night in the upper reaches of the stream that flowed down to Nimu No hot meals or even tea was available due to the lack of firewood, and a second night was spent hungry and cold, with a light snowfall adding to their discomforts Moving off again when morning came, Major Hari Chand and his commandos reached a junction of two ravines at 1500 hours. Some firewood was found there, and steaming glasses of hot tea were handed round at last.

It was 8 September, and at 1900 hours the men marched off again towards Nimu They passed a small village soon after—the first sign of man since they climbed to the Lasirmou Pass Some rations meant for the raiders was found in the village, and was expropriated. Then on they went to the big village of Nimu, by-passing an enemy picquet and learning that a big gun, probably a 3 7-inch howitzer, had been brought up by the raiders and was then in Basgo, a village about 6 km west of Nimu. Major Hari Chand decided to destroy this gun, which appeared the most important target within his reach.

The whole day of 9 September 1948 was spent by the commandos in hiding on a hill top just north of Nimu Dak Bungalow. No movement which could give away their position was permitted, and the men ate only some tinned fruit which had been brought along. When evening came, they marched off again towards Basgo In the dark night, some of the men got lost, and a few precious hours were spent in trying to find them again In the early hours of 10 September, Major Hari Chand was trying to locate, with the help of the young son of the village headman, the house in which the big gun was lying

After some difficulties, the guerillas reached the house just as dawn was breaking. Six Punjabi Mussalman gunners were found sleeping in the house, and were killed without difficulty. The 3 7-inch howitzer was destroyed by bursting a grenade in its barrel and by smashing the smaller parts on rocks Thus ended the story of the big gun which the raiders claimed had been captured at Skardu, and which they were going to use against Leh

With their mission completed, the commandos disappeared from the scene. They went on deeper behind the enemy lines to baffle their pursuers, and finally crossed over to the Shyok valley by the Nila Pass on 12 September The platoon returned to Leh on 15 September, tired but triumphant.

The first medium range penetration behind the enemy lines in Ladakh was thus a complete success. It appears almost certain that the headquarters of the raiders in Nimu Dak Bungalow could also have been destroyed and most of the staff officers killed if Major Hari Chand's men were really trained commandos and had been split up into two batches of about 15 men each to attack the two objectives simultaneously. At any rate, the exploit showed the immense possibilities of long range penetration groups, of larger size and supplied by air, in Ladakh and other sparsely populated hilly areas on India's borders. Encouraged by the results of this first experiment, Major Hari Chand led similar other expeditions in the months that followed

SUCCESS AT THARU

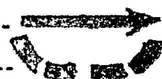
Meanwhile, the stalemate continued on the Nimu sector, with neither side able to advance. Exchanges of rifle fire and mortar duels took place frequently, without affecting the tactical situation. The raiders' forward positions ran along a north-south line just west of the Tharu *Nala*, the main posts being situated on the slopes north of the point where the Nimu track crossed the Tharu *Nala*. South of that point, there were no picquets on Nimu hill, and Nimu itself was guarded by two picquets in the near vicinity. Behind these was the raiders' headquarters in Nimu Dak Bungalow. These posts were the targets of frequent mortar shellings by the Leh garrison in September and October

On 17 September, the raiders launched a sharp attack along the Tharu front, but were beaten back without difficulty by the mortar and rifle fire of the defenders. Then, on 23 September, two platoons of Indian troops attacked a hostile position They succeeded in capturing the position, but had to abandon it again when subjected to a vigorous and prompt counter-attack. In this severe fighting, 15 raiders were killed and 3 wounded at the cost of 9 Indian casualties, but the position remained as before In the days following, the raiders further strengthened that picquet by placing an MMG there. But the Indian troops were gradually getting the upper hand in minor patrol actions, and on 27 September 7 raiders were killed and 3 wounded by an Indian Army patrol without loss

October also went by without any notable change in the situation in Ladakh The Chief of the General Staff, Major-General Kalwant Singh, visited Leh by air on 2 October, and was followed by the Army Commander, Lieut-General Cariappa, on 9 October. These visits served to raise the garrison's morale and to give them tangible proof that theirs was not a 'forgotten front '

But the tactical situation remained unchanged On 11 October, a major attack was launched against the raiders' positions in the Tharu sector Heavy fighting went on for two days, but the raiders were found to be present in large numbers in well prepared positions, and the attack

SUIT FROM LEH
TO 10 DEC 1948
ALE OF MILES/KM
5 10 15
8 16 32 KM

S ADVANCE
ATIONS

N
KHARMANG
MAROL
CHATHATANG
GRUGURDO
SURU
24 NOV
17627
77 PARA BRIGADE
KARGIL
FROM DRAS
18240
MULBEKH
SHYOK
AGHAM
RASI LA
UNG'LA
DIGAR LA
ITCHU
KUNGI LA
CHANG LA
RINGDOM

failed. Seven casualties were suffered in this attack, which proved the only important engagement in the month of October 1948.

It was indeed a stalemate in Ladakh, with neither side being able to force a decision Colonel Parab had nearly two battalions of troops under his command, and he was being called Commander, Leh Brigade, though this was mainly to deceive the enemy Still, he was unable to overcome the few hundred enemy troops opposing him. It is possible that he was deliberately holding his hand, so as to keep the raiders in Ladakh well away from the Zoji La area, where crucial operations were in progress; but no documentary evidence appears to show this However, the Zoji La thrust was, at long last, successful, and 77 Para Bde pushed through towards Machhoi and Dras on 1 November, as described later With the success of that distant operation the liberation of Ladakh was assured.

For about a fortnight, however, their fatal defeat at Zoji La produced no reaction from the raiders before Leh. On 1 November heavy rifle fire was poured out by them, though the Indian troops in their well protected positions suffered no casualty. The next day, firing and shelling continued, and the 4.2-inch mortars, recently arrived at Leh, lobbed their big HE bombs at the raiders' HQ in Nimu Dak Bungalow. After the destruction of their 3 7-inch howitzer by Major Hari Chand's men at Basgo, the raiders had nothing with which to reply to the 4 2-inch mortars On 6 November, the 4 2-inch mortars destroyed an MMG nest and scored two direct hits on the raiders' positions in Nimu. The next day, Indian patrols went forward towards Lasirmou Peak (Pt 18270), and to a point near the junction of the Indus and Zaskar rivers, about 3 km from Nimu

Meanwhile, Major Hari Chand had again disappeared behind the enemy lines with his commandos He had crossed the Zaskar river in the Chilling sector on 28 October Making their way undetected up to Lamayuru, the commandos laid ambush on the main track. They trapped a large supply convoy of 20 ponies carrying 12000 rounds of SAA, 106 bombs of 3-inch mortar and a large amount of clothing About 20 of the raiders escorting the convoy were killed, one was made prisoner, the entire load of ammunition was destroyed, and the clothing was distributed to the villagers The guerillas or commandos recrossed the Zaskar on 9 November, bringing back 5 rifles and 4 horses with them.

By then the raiders must have been getting worried about the danger to their line of communication through Kargil and Marol. The 77 Para Bde had smashed their strong defences in the Zoji La defile, and Matayan had fallen on 4 November Dras was threatened, and the raiders in Ladakh must retreat before the door closed behind them with the recapture of Kargil and Marol.

Anticipating their retreat, Headquarters Sri Division ordered Colonel Parab on 8 November to keep in firm contact with the enemy and to be prepared to pursue up to Khalatse with a force of two

companies Commander, Leh Brigade, issued his Operation Order No 1 on 9 November It provided for a pursuit of the raiders from Tharu to Khalatse, for which purpose two detachments of troops were formed, named 'X company' and 'Y company'. Each of these companies consisted of three platoons, and the column was placed under the command of Major R C Mathur These two companies were to be in readiness by the morning of 10 November [5]

For a week after that, however, the tactical situation gave no occasion for sending a pursuit column The raiders held firmly their forward positions, in spite of the mounting intensity of rifle and mortar fire against them On 11 November, the 4 2-inch mortars again blasted the enemy HQ in Nimu Dak Bungalow A fierce patrol action took place on 13 November. The 3-inch mortars were continually in action against the raiders' forward positions But the raiders held firm for a few days longer, even after the fall of Dras on 15 November

The breaking point of their tenacious resistance was reached at last on 19 November The Indian troops launched a well-prepared attack during the night of 18/19 November against two enemy picquets The attack had yet to reach its climax when the raiders suddenly broke, and fell back along the whole Tharu front The Indian troops immediately surged forward in hot pursuit. By 1600 hours that same afternoon, Saspul Gompa was reached, a distance of about 25 km from Tharu. The advance continued on the morning of 20 November Opposition was slight, and the Indian troops reached near Nurla that afternoon. On the road they passed equipment, clothing etc abandoned by the raiders in their frantic hurry to escape The important bridge at Alchi near Saspul was found only slightly damaged, and proved very useful to the pursuing troops to maintain contact with their comrades advancing along the Chilling-Lamayuru track south of the Indus Chilling village was reoccupied on 20 November and Major Hari Chand's commandos again advanced rapidly westwards, leading the way towards Lamayuru In the Shyok valley also, the raiders were in full retreat, and Lama's House area, Mondari, Unmaru, Thoise and Kharu villages were recaptured without much fighting. The preparations for the pursuit were so complete that even the lightning advance in the main Nimu sector was kept up without a hitch. Supply convoys from Leh kept up with the advancing troops, and a field telephone line was pushed forward to newly won positions within a few hours Later, the old telegraph line between Kargil and Leh was used

On 20 November, Headquarters Sri Division sent out instructions for a link up at Kargil between 77 Para Bde and Leh Brigade 77 Para Bde was expected to take Kargil by 24 November, and Leh Brigade was ordered to send patrols from Khalatse to Kargil Colonel Parab was also told to keep 2 companies in readiness to pursue the raiders towards Marol, and to spend the winter at Marol after its capture The problem of supplies was also engaging the attention of General Thimayya, and,

on 22 November, he offered to arrange an air drop between Khalatse and Nurla if Colonel Parab would select and mark out a suitable DZ. In reply, Colonel Parab indicated his choice of a DZ, but added that there was really no necessity for an air drop of supplies. The situation at Leh had changed indeed! Meanwhile, on the morning of 21 November, the pursuing troops caught up with the rearguard of the raiders, and fierce fighting took place. The raiders held their ground for three hours before turning to flee again, leaving 11 of their number dead behind them. The pursuit continued. Khalatse was entered in the early hours of the morning of 22 November. Across the river, Lamayuru was reoccupied about the same time.

With the recapture of Khalatse, the first phase of the pursuit came to an end. 22 November was spent in resting and reorganising the troops after their breathless race from Tharu, a distance of over 80 km covered in about 3 days The main body of the raiders was retreating down the Indus valley towards Marol Two companies of troops were ordered to go after them, and the commandos also crossed over the Indus from Lamayuru and advanced towards Marol [6] A detachment accompanied Colonel Parab towards Bod Kharbu to link up with 77 Para Bde near Kargil, while the remainder made Khalatse into a firm base and consolidated the area occupied The local villagers, of course, were overjoyed to be liberated from the terrible oppression of the raiders.

On the morning of 23 November, Colonel Parab left Khalatse for Kargil, where his men linked up the next day with their comrades advancing from the Zoji La. The area south of the Indus was thus largely cleared of the raiders. In the Shyok valley to the north, the militia and Indian troops kept up their advance, and recaptured Biagdangdo and Malakcha on 27 November The advance slowed down after that against stiffening resistance. The route became progressively worse, and supplies were getting scarce, although about 360 kg of rations was captured from the raiders at one place. Finally, the Shyok valley column was halted about 8 km west of Biagdangdo about the end of November

In the Indus valley, the advance continued a little longer A company and C company of 2/8 GR were sent towards Marol, but encountered heavy opposition as they neared the objective. The long route from Khalatse to Grugurdo, was traversed without much difficulty, but by then the raiders had recovered from the shock of their defeat and rallied round. The advance came to a halt before Chathatang only about 5 km from Marol. Fierce patrol encounters and mortar shelling took place, but the raiders held their ground. The hostile positions were situated on either bank of the Indus. No progress could be made against them up to the last week of December The opposition was strong and stubborn, and winter had also arrived. On 28 December, a particularly heavy snowfall blanketed the hills and valleys, bringing active operations to a standstill The opposing troops remained in their

dug-in positions before Chathatang when the Cease Fire was orderd from midnight of 1 January 1949

CONCLUSION

From the changing fortunes of the war in Ladakh, several significant points emerged

There appears no doubt that in the last week of May 1948, and again in July, Leh was within the raiders' grasp It still remains a mystery why they did not press home their attacks and capture Leh once for all Their leadership in Ladakh turned out to be of a vastly different quality from the daring and inspired performance against Kargil and Dras. They can also be charged with having ignored the excellent opportunities for commando or guerilla type penetrations, for which the conditions were ideal It is true that the local villagers were against them, but their opposition was meek and almost entirely passive, and it was of negligible importance in that vast, sparsely populated and thinly held region The raiders proved incapable even of learning from the example placed before them by Major Hari Chand's guerillas. If they had adopted similar tactics, the defenders of Leh would have been placed in a very awkward position and would probably have suffered considerable losses

The Indian commanders at Leh appear to have performed rather better But the serious setback in July was entirely unexpected and it appears clear that Major Prithi Chand went over to the offensive without due preparation, instead of consolidating his defences and making sure of protecting Leh and the vital airfield Colonel Parab was cautious in his moves and more thorough in his defensive preparations Time was in his favour, and his problem of recapturing Khalatse, Mulbekh etc was in the end solved by the advance of 77 Para Bde from Zoji La to Kargil In the pursuit from Tharu westward in November, Colonel Parab was shown at his best, and his careful planning was rewarded by the smooth rapidity of advance up to Khalatse

Major Hari Chand's brilliant exploits behind the enemy lines were acknowledged by the grant of MVC to him after the campaign. His commandos certainly shook the raiders' morale and inflicted losses on them, but the real value of those medium range penetrations must be as small scale models for appreciably bigger, long range penetrations by specially trained mountain commandos supported and maintained from the air in future operations in that area The Ladakh and Rupshu regions appear to offer tremendous opportunities for such tactics which, properly exploited, can produce startling results

The Ladakh operations showed once again the crucial importance of logistics. It was essentially a war of supplies and reinforcements, and the Manali route emerged from it as L of C of great strategic importance It was safe from attacks from every side, separated by broad mountain belts from possible hostile bases In case of another

emergency in that region, General Thimayya's proposal for setting up a big Advance Supply Base at Manali, and organising a large force of ponies and porters there, should prove invaluable.

Air transport for men and supplies proved of unique importance in Ladakh. The Dakotas of the Royal Indian Air Force did not win the battle for Ladakh, but they certainly saved it from being lost In a region where the alternative was the mule, supply planes, even in ridiculously small numbers, made a tremendous difference in the fighting potential of a force.

As already mentioned, the liberation of the occupied area of Ladakh was greatly facilitated by the Indian advance from Zoji La to Kargil in November 1948 This advance was the most important as well as the most brilliant operation of the war on the Northern Front, and is described in the chapter that follows

Notes

1 This bridge was rebuilt by the raiders a little later, and burnt down at both ends by them again when they retreated finally from the area in November 1948 See comments by Col H S Parab

2 On the return journey, the planes brought back 16 Sikh troops, probably the remnants of Lt-Col S B Singh's contingent sent from Srinagar for the relief of Skardu

3 Comments from Gen Shrinagesh According to Col Parab, the column reached Leh on 7 July 1948

4 According to Col Parab, the Gorkhas retreated from Himis Shukpa in fairly good order and actually ambushed the raiders the same day near Tharu, killing 20 of them, which action halted the enemy's advance But this ambush at Tharu is not mentioned in any of the messages sent from Leh to Sri Div On the other hand, Leh reported on 12 July that Maj Hari Chand arrived at Leh from Himis Shukpa at 0100 hours, and remnants of 2/4 GR and 2/8 GR coys were expected to reach in ones and twos See Col Parab's comments

5 Gen Thimayya says he had ordered Col Parab not to attack till word was given, and then to pursue fast

6 The militia did not pursue the fleeing enemy as fast as ordered by Col Parab They dallied on the way, either to rejoice with their friends in the liberated villages en route or to wreak vengeance on enemy collaborators

CHAPTER XVIII

The Recapture of Dras and Kargil

(July–December 1948)

The daring success of the hostiles at Kargil and Dras, in May 1948, and the subsequent withdrawal of the Indian troops from Machhoi to Zoji La, have already been described in Chapter XV. It will be recalled that, by the middle of July, 1 Patiala had been withdrawn to the Zoji La itself, and held picquets on the steep heights on either flank of the narrow pass Men of 1 Patiala had also to guard their own line of communication from Baltal to well behind Sonamarg So their dispositions at Zoji La were necessarily defensive, designed primarily to block the raiders' entry into the Sind valley at Baltal or Sonamarg

The natural features of the area have also been described in sufficient details, and may be briefly recounted here. From Baltal the track climbed steeply to the pass, which appeared like a deep and narrow cleft in the high, snow-capped mountain wall which ran in unbroken grandeur on either side of it. From the saddle of the pass, the track to Dras continued eastward in a slope that was hardly perceptible The bottom of the deep cleft was in fact a solid snow-bed, and from its two ends issued forth ice-cold streams, one cascading down the mountain side to Baltal, and the other flowing gently eastward to Gumri and Machhoi From Zoji La almost all the way to Dras, the track ran along the deep and narrow ravine, overlooked and commanded by the high hills on either side To force a passage through this defile was, therefore, an exceptionally difficult undertaking

Nor was it easy to outflank the Zoji La position. The mountain wall on either side had an average altitude of 4880 metres To the north, the first negotiable pass in the mountain range was the Bot Kulan Gali at a height of about 4500 metres.[1] This was about 19 km from the Zoji La as the crow flies, and was accessible from Sonamarg Once over the Bot Kulan Gali, seasoned alpine troops could either go forward to Dras via the Muski *Nala*, or turn right to come on to the main track near Gumri Both these routes were exceedingly difficult To the south of Zoji La, the Himalayan Range had no practicable route across it for over 80 km, the Bobang Pass being the nearest. For crossing over from the Bobang Pass, one had to go out of the Sind valley and through Srinagar to Khanabal near Anantnag. And after crossing the Bobang Pass, the difficult track led down the Suru valley to Kargil and not to Gumri or to Dras [2] From the south, therefore, the Zoji La could be outflanked only strategically and not tactically. The outflanking troops could rejoin the main body at Dras only after crossing the Umba La or the Lasar La.

It will be seen that turning movements from either flank were

attempted, besides frontal infantry attacks, against the Zoji La enemy position before the tough tactical problem was solved by the use of tanks

THE EARLY PLANS AND PROBLEMS

With the fall of Kargil and Dras, the entire Northern Front of the Jammu and Kashmir theatre of operations appeared gravely threatened The hostiles were menacing Bandipur from Gurais and the Rajdiangan Pass, were hammering at the door of the Sind valley at Zoji La, and had cut off the main route to Leh. The long and difficult Manali route as well as air supply being still untried, the garrison of Leh appeared doomed. The political effects of the raiders' looting and burning of Leh and the rich Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh could not be exaggerated, and it was vitally necessary to prevent such a major disaster.

As early as 4 June 1948, therefore, Major-General K.S. Thimayya was instructed to prepare plans for recapturing Dras and Kargil, and for relieving the besieged garrison of Skardu. These instructions were repeated on 15 June. The general policy of the Government of India was to stabilise and consolidate the areas already liberated, and to try to continue the advance on Muzaffarabad. But if this advance proved impossible in the circumstances, priority was to be given to the recapture of Dras and Kargil and the relief of Skardu, for which plans and additional requirements of troops, if necessary, were to be urgently intimated.

In response, General Thimayya submitted a plan on 20 June for the recapture of Gurais and the relief of Skardu. No details of this plan, named 'Operation Snipe' are available. It seems the plan envisaged an early capture of Gurais followed by an advance across the Burzil Pass and the Deosai plateau to Skardu [3] This ambitious plan would have not only removed the threat to Bandipur and raised the siege of Skardu, but would also have cut off the enemy's line of communication to Kargil, Dras and the Leh area

The first part of the plan was accomplished by the recapture of Gurais on 29 June, as described earlier But the plan for advance to the Burzil Pass and over the Deosai plains was never attempted, or even approved by HQ Western Command. The administrative difficulties of moving and maintaining a large force across that barren and icy region would have been well-nigh insurmountable, and after crossing the Burzil Pass the operation might not have even had the advantage of surprise. Moreover, enemy pressure was very heavy in the Southern sector in July, and the entire 9th (Frontier) Division of the Pakistan Army was reported to be in action in the Chakothi-Tithwal area Sri Div, therefore, had no troops to spare for the advance to Burzil or Dras, and no help could be sent to 1 Patiala to enable them to maintain their valuable positions at Machhoi On 25 July, Thimayya reported that the hostiles were attacking Kanzalwan, infiltrating towards Chowkibal,

Kupwara and the vital Nastachhun Pass from Tithwal area, concentrating near Haji Pir Pass and threatening Punch, Uri and Gulmarg. Thimayya had all his troops already committed· 161 Infantry Brigade and 163 Infantry Brigade had only two coys each in reserve, and the 77 Para Brigade had no reserve at all. Of his outlying garrisons, both Leh and Skardu appeared on their last legs. The 5 Mahratta, 3 Jat and 1 Royal Gorkha Rifles arrived about the end of July 1948 to reinforce Sri Div and enable it to attack Dras-Kargil and link up with Skardu, but all these three battalions had to be rushed to hold the enemy attacks on the Tithwal-Chakothi front. The Gwalior Mountain Battery was expected to reach Srinagar early in August, but no other major reinforcements were available, and Lieut-General K.M. Cariappa, the GOC-in-C, Western Command, was compelled to authorise Thimayya to fall back on Uri if forced to withdraw.

On 5 August 1948, Thimayya submitted a statement of his requirements and the troops available in his command. To stabilise the position and to hold each sector firmly, he estimated the requirements as

for Uri-Chakothi sector	10 battalions
,, Tithwal area	5 battalions
,, line of communication from Tithwal to Handwara	2 battalions
,, Gurais-Kanzalwan sector	2 battalions
,, the Zoji La	1 battalion
,, the Pir Panjal-Gulmarg area	1 battalion
Total	21 battalions

But he had only 17 battalions of the Indian Army and one SF battalion, i.e the 7 K I. available with him Three more Indian Army battalions at least were, therefore, required before Sri Div could be safe.

Thimayya had in fact staved off disaster only by exploiting to the full his advantage in operating on interior lines He had rushed his forces quickly from one sector to another, to meet acute danger, and somehow held the enemy at bay But he could not spare additional troops for operation 'Snipe' or for operation 'Duck' (for the recapture of Dras and Kargil), unless and until the hostile pressure on Chakothi and Tithwal eased considerably and thus permitted him to take out some troops from those sectors

Then, with the fall of Skardu on 14 August, the main purpose of operation 'Snipe' ceased to exist All efforts were concentrated on the recapture of Dras and Kargil and the link up with Leh—'Operation Duck'

THE TURNING MOVEMENT FROM THE RIGHT

The tragic fate of Skardu underlined the danger to Leh. Although regular air supply to Leh started again from 15 August, it was necessary

to recapture Dras and Kargil before Leh could be safe. Time for doing this was getting short, because at least a month was considered necessary for stocking Kargil after its capture, and the Zoji La route would be blocked by snow any time after October.

On 18 August, therefore, Thimayya sent to HQ Western Command his plan for 'Operation Duck'. It involved the use of four battalions, of which three were available and the fourth was to be obtained by thinning out the Uri sector. Moreover, Sri Div would have no reserve left while operation 'Duck' was going on, and Cariappa's approval was sought to mounting the attack under these conditions, and was obtained without delay.

In essence, the plan was to turn the Zoji La position from the right and thus compel the hostiles to leave their strong defences at Gumri and Machhoi areas The whole 77 Para Brigade was to march north-east from the road-head at Khanabal, cross the main Himalayan range by the Bobang or Lonvilad Pass and then march down the Suru valley. One battalion was then to cross the Lasar La and attack Dras, whereupon 1 Patiala was to advance quickly from Zoji La and link up with the outflanking column at Dras. The remaining two battalions were to continue down the Suru valley to capture Kargil.

Apart from 1 Patiala holding position at Zoji La, the troops who were to take part in the attack were 3 Jat, 1/5 Royal Gorkha Rifles (FF) and 5 Mahratta, supported by 1 platoon MMG, the J & K Mountain Battery, detachment 433 RIE and 83 Field Ambulance.

In spite of all the difficulties, troops were concentrated at Khanabal 3 Jat reached there on 23 August, and 1/5 RGR arrived on 27 August post-haste from Delhi. But the next day the operation was suddenly cancelled. A serious enemy infiltration had been reported in the Tithwal sector. 3 Jat was, therefore, rushed to Sopore on 28 August, and 1/5 RGR and other units ordered to move to the Sonamarg area. The projected turning movement from the right had come to nothing

It seems doubtful if the advance along the Suru valley could have been accomplished as planned For that difficult, sparsely populated region, a brigade was a massive force and it would have been very difficult to transport its rations and ammunition over the long mule tracks. The advance would have been necessarily slow and cumbersome, and all surprise would have been lost, giving the enemy time to concentrate all his forces to oppose it from excellent natural defensive positions. It must have been a realisation of these considerations which led General Thimayya not to attempt it again, but to change the plan basically. But, perhaps, the advance down the Suru would have enjoyed greater probability of success if only a single, lightly-equipped, quick-marching battalion had been employed in it. Since only 100 men of the Gilgit Scouts were reliably estimated to be at Suru village and one platoon of Chitralis at Sanko, an Indian Army battalion should have been quite capable of overcoming all resistance and taking even the

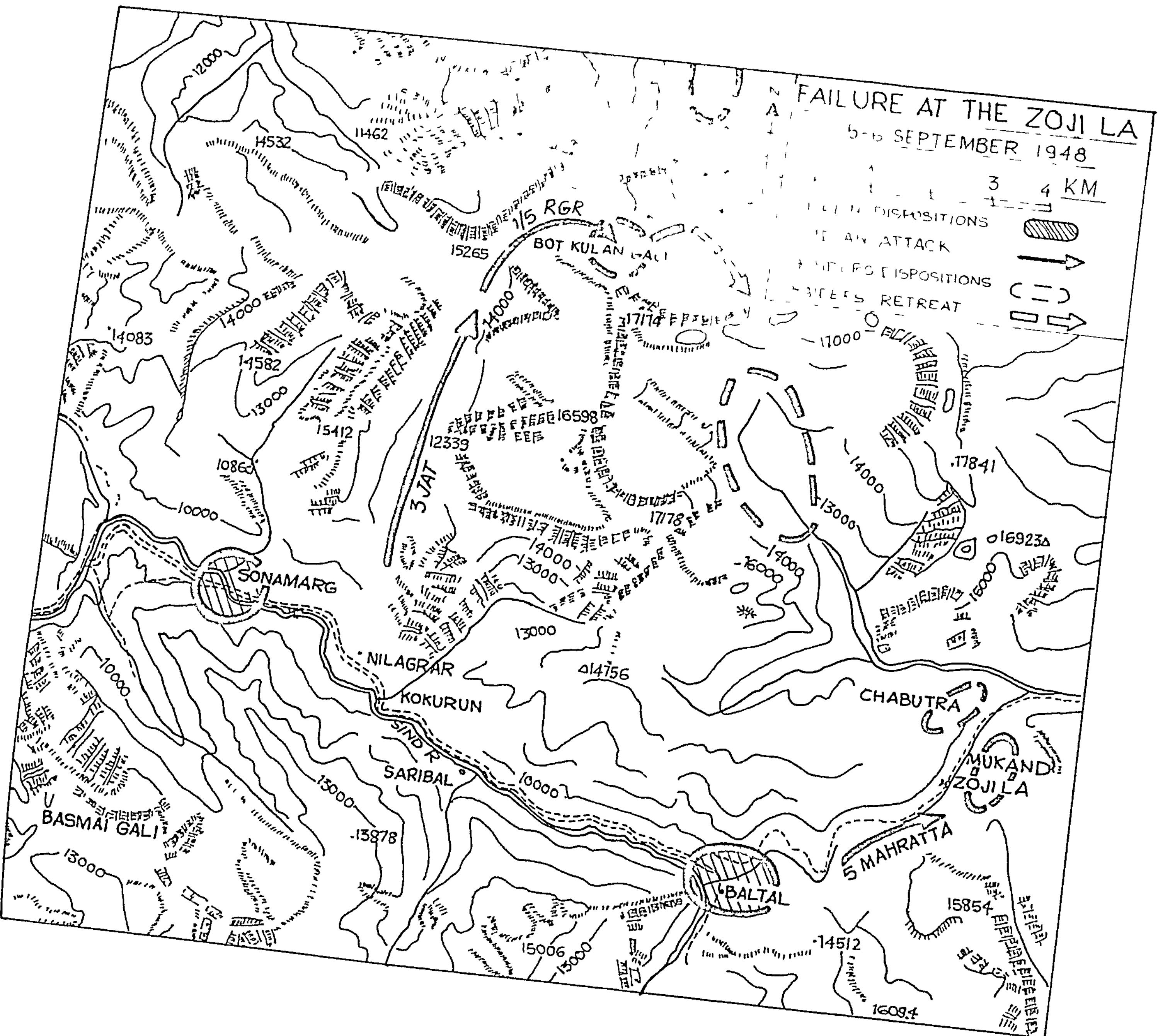
defenders of Dras by surprise Such had been the raiders' plan which gave them the possession of Kargil and Dras, but perhaps irregular troops and their commanders can take risky gambles on which professional soldiers would hardly care to stake their reputations.

THE TURNING MOVEMENT FROM THE LEFT

The plan for the turning movement from the right proving abortive, a turning movement from the left was attempted It was decided that two battalions with mule transport should climb up from Sonamarg to the Bot Kulan Gali, push down the Muski *Nala* and take Dras by surprise At the same time, the other two battalions of 77 Para Brigade were to advance on the main Zoji La track and link up with Dras[4] A company of 5/11 Gorkha Rifles was also to cross over from the Khanabal area to the Suru valley to create a diversion there and tie up as many hostiles as possible in that distant sector

The hostile penetration in Tithwal area proved a false alarm, and so orders were immediately issued for the first actual attack in the Zoji La sector 3 Jat and 1/5 Royal Gorkha Rifles reached Sonamarg on 1 September from Sopore and Khanabal respectively These two battalions were to form the column for the advance through Bot Kulan Gali, the column commander being Lieut-Colonel A S Pathania, MC, of 1/5 Royal Gorkha Rifles. Of the other two battalions, namely, 5 Mahratta and 1 Patiala, the former was to force the Zoji La positions by capturing the Mukand Hill on the right, thus allowing the latter to push on to Gumri and beyond. 5 Mahratta was ready at Baltal, and 1 Patiala was already holding picquets at Zoji La The attack was first scheduled to begin on 2 September, but was postponed to 3 September.

Accordingly, Lieut-Colonel Pathania led out his force from Sonamarg before dawn on 3 September 1948. His column was composed of 1/5 RGR and 3 Jat, 1 section MMG (1 Mahar), Advance Dressing Station, 83 Field Ambulance, detachment 13 Field Coy and a porter group 1/5 RGR was leading The track was narrow and climbed steeply by the side of a rushing mountain torrent Each man was carrying six days' hard scale rations and his pack weighed no less than 18 kg. Progress was naturally slow, and by nightfall on 3 September the main body had only reached half way up, where it camped The march was resumed on the morning of 4 September. Due to the need of maintaining strict secrecy, the route had been "recced" only by some local guides who had reported the track reasonably good for ponies and no enemy positions till 16 km beyond the pass. 1/5 RGR, however, found itself held up by an enemy post manned by a platoon and supported by MMGs right at the crest of Bot Kulan Gali This was in the afternoon of 4 September As there was not enough daylight to mount an attack that day, nor was any flanking movement possible, Pathania had to halt his troops for the night. Their camping ground was about 3 km short of Bot Kulan Gali


FAILURE AT THE ZOJI LA
SEPTEMBER 1948
3
4 KM
DISPOSITIONS
ATTACK
DISPOSITIONS
RETREAT
1/5 RGR
BOT KULAN GALI
3 JAT
5 MAHRATTA
SONAMARG
NILAGRAR
KOKURUN
SIND R
SARIBAL
BALTAL
CHABUTRA
MUKAND
ZOJI LA
BASMAI GALI
12000
14532
11462
15265
14083
14000
14582
13000
15412
10860
10000
12339
16598
17174
17000
17841
17178
16000
16923
14756
13878
15006
14512
16094
15854

After reconnoitring the ground on 5 September, 1/5 RGR launched an attack the same evening. In spite of the terrible ground and enemy opposition, the attack was pressed home by two coys under Lieut Ichhe Gurung, MC, and the pass was captured by the morning of 6 September 3 Jat immediately pushed through the pass and occupied the ridge by 0900 hours. Picquets were posted on the high hills on either side and a fair amount of equipment and ammunition left behind by the raiders in their hurried withdrawal was collected.

In spite of the dash and stamina shown by the troops, the operation had to be abandoned at this stage. All surprise had been lost and the fleeing raiders from Bot Kulan Gali had warned all their comrades behind them to be prepared The route was too difficult to be forced against prepared and well manned positions Moreover, the track was found completely buried in snow and full of crevices The troops were still willing and capable of pushing on, but the mules could not have accompanied them. Orders were first amended to move down the Muski *Nala* and turn to Pindras instead of continuing to Dras, and the possibilities of advancing to Gumri direct from Bot Kulan Gali were also explored But both these alternatives proved impracticable due to the difficult tracks and the enemy opposition Under these circumstances, there was no alternative but to cancel the operation Pathania, therefore, kept his forces halted and awaited instructions from Headquarters 77 Para Brigade These orders arrived about mid-day on 9 September and 3 Jat left immediately for Baltal in compliance It reached the Sonamarg-Baltal road the next morning and by 13 September the entire column was back to its base, leaving behind one company to guard the pass.

The operation was equally unsuccessful at Zoji La From 3 September, 1 Patiala supported by 30 Field Battery and J & K Mountain Battery less one section, had intensified its activities in the Zoji La. 5 Mahratta commenced the main attack at 0300 hours on 5 September By 0700 hours that morning the Mahrattas had reached the top of Mukand Hill They had encountered no opposition and suffered no casualties because the hostiles had spent the night in comparative comfort in the *Nala* The attack seemed to be going exceptionally favourably and the Mahrattas in their exultation decided that the enemy had fled from the entire area They, therefore, did not dig in or take other defensive measures. About 1000 hours the hostiles suddenly opened a withering fire on the Mahrattas from Chabutra Hill across the *Nala* and from the lower slopes of Mukand. They came out of their bunkers and were seen swarming up the Mukand Hill from several directions The Mahrattas had left behind two of their companies and it seems their commanding officer also had not accompanied them Utterly surprised and caught in the heavy cross fire of machine guns and light automatics, the Mahrattas could not hold the feature. They asked urgently for air support, but by

the time the Tempests arrived on the scene twenty minutes later, the Mahrattas had already evacuated Mukand. During this withdrawal they suffered six casualties The attack on Zoji La also thus failed and the first actual attempt of 77 Para Brigade to recapture Dras and Kargil ended in a fiasco.

The diversionary operation in the Suru valley was also fruitless. By 1900 hours on 6 September, the company of 5/11 Gorkha Rifles had crossed the main Himalayan range and was established near Suru village No hostiles had been encountered till then, but the next day patrols discovered 60 raiders in well-constructed positions covering Suru village [5] More raiders were reported approaching the area from Kargil. The Gorkhas sent patrols to probe into the enemy positions, and there were several sharp clashes But by 11 September the strength of the raiders at Suru had increased to about 400 The main attack at Zoji La had already failed, and no supplies or even fire-wood was available to the Gorkhas in Suru area, so, on 13 September, they were ordered to withdraw to Sokhniz.

FAILURE OF THE FRONTAL ATTACK

Turning movements from either side proving impracticable, Brigadier K L Atal, Commander 77 Para Brigade, decided to attempt to break through the Zoji La defences by a frontal attack. Time was short, so the preparations were hastily made and orders issued on 11 September 1948. The plan was for two battalions to advance under the cover of darkness and capture by surprise the two dominating hills to the left and the right of the main track beyond Zoji La. Mukand, the hill to the right, was given as the objective of 5 Mahratta since they already were familiar with its features from their previous attack Chabutra, the hill to the left, was to be captured by 3 Jat. The occupation of these two dominating peaks would open the way to Gumri for the troops following behind D day for the attack was fixed on the night of 12/13 September, but rain and snow came down from 0900 hours on 12 September and the attack had to be postponed by a day.

The Mahrattas and the Jat troops detailed for the attacks started off from the jeep-head near the top of Zoji La about 2200 hours on 13 September. The Mahrattas encountered no special obstacles, but somehow mistook one of the lower shoulders of the hill for the crest of Mukand. This they hastily occupied Daylight showed them the peak of Mukand still towering above them, but then it was too late to mend their mistake The raiders opened heavy and accurate fire on them from the top of Mukand, from MMG ridge further to the east and from Chabutra across the *Nala* The Mahrattas were pinned down and could not advance Their company commander, Major Nambiar, tried to attack a small hillock but was severely wounded before he could lead the men far Guns of 30 Field Battery and J & K Mountain Battery gave full

support, but no infantry reinforcement could be sent to Mukand in daylight At 1630 hours on 14 September the Mahrattas withdrew from Mukand.[6]

The attack on Chabutra by 3 Jat proved equally unsuccessful. It was launched by A and D companies, with B company in reserve. Lieut-Colonel Ran Singh Ahlawat, the Commanding Officer, accompanied his troops in person to direct the attack But the local guide leading the Jats managed to lose his way in the night. After proceeding some distance along the slope of the hill, the Jats came across a steep and slippery patch of snow which could not be negotiated. They, therefore, had to descend to the bottom of the *Nala* and climb up again on the other side of the snow-patch Further obstacles were encountered, with the result that by 0500 hours on 14 September the leading company was still about 550 metres short of its objective, with the second company following about 350 metres behind it. Daylight came a few minutes later, and with it a murderous fire was opened by the raiders from all sides. Within a few minutes all the signallers of the battalion were either killed or wounded and communication sets were all damaged. The hostile fire by MMGs and Browning automatic rifles was incredibly fierce and accurate, and was coming from all directions The raiders also threw hand grenades on the Jats from the top of Chabutra and even rolled down boulders to crush the gallant men painfully crawling up the steep hill. As the battalion War Diary puts it, "The severity, concentration and accuracy of the enemy fire and the fighting that followed are not only beyond imagination but also beyond expression." This is easily borne out by the fact that out of the two forward platoons only nine men returned safe The Jats, however, replied gallantly to the fire and hung on to their positions in spite of heavy casualties.

Brigade Headquarters, meanwhile, had no direct communication with 3 Jat and only learned about the ferocity of the hostile fire and the heavy casualties suffered from the accounts of the few wounded who could be evacuated during the afternoon. It was impossible to send reinforcements to the Jats in daylight and the attack on Mukand had already failed. A contact patrol, with wireless sets and telephones, was sent forward but could not establish contact due to the heavy enemy fire. With a heavy heart, therefore, Brigadier Atal felt compelled to order Lieut-Colonel Ran Singh to pull out from Chabutra during the evening of 14 September. This was accomplished with enterprise and skill and the Jats were back at Baltal that night. On coming back Lieut-Colonel Ran Singh protested against the order to withdraw, stating that he could have captured the hill of Chabutra during the night of 14/15 September. It appears that the enemy commander also admitted after the Cease Fire that by the evening of 14 September his men had practically run out of ammunition, and he would have been forced to order them to withdraw to Gumri or Machhoi the same night if the attacks had continued. But fate had decreed otherwise, and the second attempt to force the Zoji La position also failed.

TANKS ON THE ZOJI LA

The situation was now getting desperate. Two well planned attacks against the Zoji La had failed. The troops involved in them had suffered fairly heavy casualties, as shown below.

Unit	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
3 Jat	13	57	2	72
5 Mahratta	6	10	2	18
1/5 RGR	—	3	—	3
J & K Mountain Battery	1 officer	2	1	4
		Grand Total		97

What was worse, the enemy's positions remained completely intact at the end of these two operations, and were sure to be further strengthened in the light of the experience gained Winter was fast approaching and it was already doubtful if Kargil could be captured and stocked with supplies before heavy snowfalls and icy blizzards gripped the area

Urgent high-level discussions took place at Srinagar and Delhi to decide the next step The difficulties and dangers of the Zoji La operation were obvious But the alternative of leaving the whole of Ladakh to its fate was unacceptable, both politically and strategically. It was decided, therefore, to make one more attempt to push through the Zoji La, and it was clearly understood to be the last chance of averting disaster in the Northern Front of the Jammu and Kashmir operations.

A frontal attack on the Zoji La could not surprise the hostiles in the manner of a normal operation So everything possible was done to surprise them by the method of its execution, and to keep them guessing by adopting an elaborate deception scheme Moves to the concentration area at Baltal were ordered to be made at night, and a feint attack was planned in the Suru valley [7] But the real surprise for the enemy was to be the use of tanks for the Zoji La attack [8] This was a bold decision, for tanks had never before been used at such an altitude by any army, and even the performance of the engine and the lubricating system at that height and in that cold could not be confidently predicted. Many of the bridges en route were not strong enough to carry tanks, and, of course, there was no track fit for tanks from Baltal to Zoji La But desperate situations require drastic remedies, and orders were issued to use tanks to push through the Zoji La The Engineers were given the task of making the track fit for tanks at the earliest possible date By dint of superhuman efforts, and working night and day, they accomplished their task by 15 October The problem of the weak bridges was solved by removing the gun-turrets from the tanks, and conveying them separately to Baltal. Apart from reducing the weight of the tanks, this

little trick had the advantage of effectively hiding from the civilians the fact that tanks were going to Baltal, for without their turrets the tanks were easily made to look like covered carriers. It was a remarkable feat of "security" to take the tanks up to Baltal without any of the numerous enemy agents in the Valley knowing about it.

The plan for the crucial attack—named 'Operation Sparrow' later superseded by 'Operation Bison'—was issued by Brig Atal on 14 October He had under his command 5 Mahratta, 1/5 RGR, 1 Patiala, and 4 Rajput in place of 3 Jat which was busy elsewhere. The artillery units taking part were 30 Field Battery, 51 (Para) Field Battery and the Jammu and Kashmir Mountain Battery. 7 Cavalry under Lt-Col Rajindar Singh (popularly known as "Sparrow") was the armoured force, with twelve covered carriers also provided The tanks were to advance through the Zoji La and deal with the formidable enemy positions on Mukand, Chabutra, MMG ridge and North Hill. A coy of 1 Patiala was to follow them in covered carriers to Gumri area. 1/5 RGR, supported by 30 Field Battery, 51 (Para) Field Battery and Jammu and Kashmir Mountain Battery, was to mop up and capture Mukand from its lower slopes to the other end at 'small U', after the tanks had reached Gumri and destroyed the main enemy positions. 1 Patiala (less one coy) was given orders to assault and occupy MMG ridge beyond Mukand. A few platoons of 5 Mahratta were told to occupy high ground near Chabutra and overlooking the Bod Gumbur Nar before D day, thus preventing the hostiles on Chabutra from launching a counter-attack while Mukand and MMG ridge were being captured [9] After they were captured, 4 Rajput was to be pushed forward towards Machhoi, and the operation was to be continued till the recapture of Dras Tempests of the RIAF were to give the fullest support to the attack. All details of the crucial operation were carefully worked out, and instructions were issued even about the use of smoke shells in the attack and the regulation of civilian traffic in the Sind valley.[10]

The attack was to begin on 20 October and all arrangements were completed in time. But on 18 October, it started snowing. Heavy snowfall continued on 19 October and 20 October, burying the newly built track, reducing visibility and making all movement over the steep slopes practically impossible. So the projected attack was postponed to 25 October. But it snowed again on 23 October, necessitating a postponement of the attack to 29 October. It proved impossible to begin the offensive even on 29 October, as the snow was still thawing and the tracks and hill-sides were too slippery for movement. Finally, 1 November was fixed as the D day. It was very doubtful now if Kargil or even Dras could be captured before the great freeze-up, and Brigadier Atal was clearly told that if it could not begin on 1 November, the great attack would be finally abandoned.

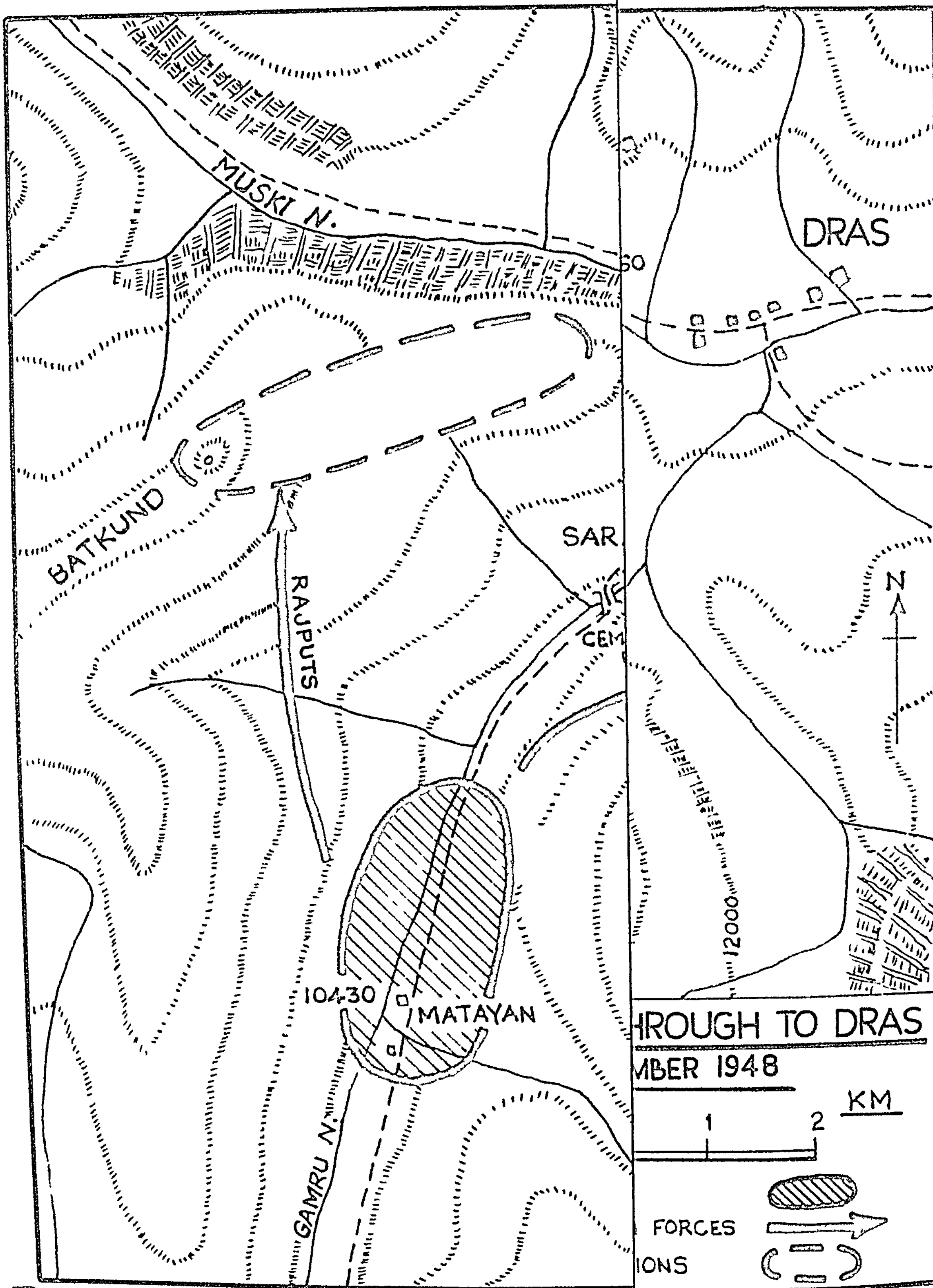
The dawn of 1 November broke with heavy grey clouds scudding overhead. A chill wind came screaming down the mountains and a fitful

drizzle and light snow was falling. The troops were ready and tense, with that peculiar empty feeling in the stomach which even veterans have just before a battle. The attack was to be heralded by a terrific bombardment of the defile at 1000 hours The snowing continued, and no guns roared even after 1000 hours. Many began to think in despair that the attack had been abandoned, and the fate of Leh was sealed. The tension and uncertainty were becoming unbearable when, at 1030 hours, the artillery barrage began. The tanks of C squadron, 7 Cavalry, clattered forward soon after, led by a 15 cwt Dodge with a winch to pull out any tank that stalled or got stuck An artillery observer (F O O.) went forward in one of the tanks to direct the artillery fire at the exact targets. The two armoured car troops of A squadron, 7 Cavalry, followed the tanks at the tail of the column, and one coy of 1 Patiala in covered carriers gave close protection. Fortunately, no anti-tank mines were encountered, nor did any tank get stuck in the soft snow The streams of bullets from the raiders' MMGs and rifles came furiously, but flattened themselves on the tempered steel of the tanks' sides, and fell harmlessly to the ground Most of the hostiles had never seen tanks in action before, and were completely demoralised by the iron monsters coming close and blasting their bunkers into smithereens The violent fury of the shelling added to their terror Their casualties were very heavy, and the survivors left their positions and fled in utter panic

The tanks reached Gumri plain by the afternoon In view of the unexpected enemy collapse, 1/5 RGR was ordered not to wait for nightfall but to attack immediately and occupy Mukand, Chabutra, North Hill and MMG ridge. These frowning hills, which had proved so formidable in earlier attacks, fell now after insignificant resistance By 2115 hours on 1 November, 1 Patiala also reached Gumri, the flanking hills were firmly held and, at long last, the Zoji La defile had been burst open

ON THE ROAD TO DRAS

In the early hours of the morning of 2 November, 1 Patiala moved out from Gumri to continue the advance The men were familiar with every rock and gully in the area, and had acquired the supreme confidence and skill of tried veterans Climbing the hills on either flank quickly and silently in the dark, they approached the hostile positions from above The defile was not more than 90 metres wide beyond Gumri, and the raiders occupied positions on either flank. These positions were carved out of rock well-camouflaged and held by 60 men each. One coy of 1 Patiala assaulted each position in the grey light of dawn at 0530 hours The raiders were taken by surprise, fired wildly in all directions and soon fled in disorder. The remnants were mopped up, and the Indian troops could be clearly seen "bayoneting out the hiding enemy as if on a fox-hunt" After this attack, nearly a score of dead raiders were counted on the hillsides and much booty was captured,


MUSKI N.
DRAS
SO
BATKUND
RAJPUTS
SAR
CEM
N
12000
10430
MATAYAN
GAMRU N.
HROUGH TO DRAS
MBER 1948
KM
1
2
FORCES
IONS

including a 3.7-inch howitzer complete with accessories and instruments, 2 Bren guns and plenty of ammunition.

The advance continued. One coy of 1 Patiala, supported by mortars, MMGs and tanks, attacked Machhoi itself and captured it by 1345 hours. Another coy passed through and occupied the next hill at 1600 hours. The advance thus covered 10 km on 2 November, and the most difficult stretch of the route was left behind.

A conference of the senior officers of 77 Para Bde was held at Machhoi soon after its capture on 2 November. The administrative and supply arrangements were finalised, and Brigadier Atal gave his orders for the advance to continue. 4 Rajput and 1/5 RGR were to come up to Machhoi by the next morning, and 1 Patiala was to advance that afternoon and capture the Island Feature, after which the Rajputs were to push on to Matayan. On 3 November, Lt-Gen Shrinagesh and Maj-Gen Thimayya visited Machhoi to encourage the forward troops and to satisfy themselves about the arrangements for the next stage of the advance.

According to the above plan, 1 Patiala resumed the advance from Machhoi on the afternoon of 3 November. It crushed all resistance with the help of guns, mortars and MMGs, and captured the Island Feature by 1920 hours. The Rajputs pushed through immediately, and succeeded in occupying Matayan and advancing some distance beyond by the morning of 4 November. That afternoon 1/5 RGR and two coys of 1 Patiala also concentrated at Matayan.

By 4 November the advance of 77 Para Bde had reached a point just short of Pindras. But then it came up against a series of very formidable positions. Towering above the little village of Pindras was Batkundi hill, with its peak 5102 metres high. Batkundi formed the left flank of the track to Dras, the long ridge running eastwards from the peak being divided into Kumar and Anant sectors. The entire range from Pt. 16741 to Pt. 12967 presented the aspect almost of a sheer rock-wall. Even the veterans of 77 Para Bde could not scale to the top of this ridge, except through a few narrow gullies and rock-slides, at which converged the fire of all the enemy's MMGs and light automatics. The raiders had constructed their bunkers on the top of the ridge, invulnerable to artillery or tank fire. These positions commanded the entire route from Pindras almost up to Dras and no force could advance along the track till these positions were captured. To the south of the track rose another great mountain range, but fortunately it was too high and cold for even the Gilgit raiders to occupy it in strength.

Their first rush on 4 November carried the Rajputs to the lower slopes of Batkundi, and a firm position was established there. Along the main track, the limit of advance that day was approximately 2 km short of Pindras. The hostiles had their main positions on Batkundi, and on the main track, where there [illegible] a bridge which they had destroyed. These defensive [illegible]re backed by others on Pt. 12967.

On 5 November, Brigadier Atal ordered 4 Rajput and 1/5 RGR to attack Batkundi and Pt 12967 respectively But the hilltop positions were not to be so easily conquered The Rajputs found Batkundi unscaleable, and the few possible approaches well-covered with automatic fire. They came back The attack on Pt. 12967 also failed The Gorkhas easily crossed the stream at night and occupied a base position near Pindras, then stealthily crept up on Pt. 12967. Suddenly, one of the two companies leading the attack found itself within a few metres of an enemy position. It lay low, not willing to disclose its arrival to the enemy Meanwhile it was getting late, and Battalion Headquarters of 1/5 RGR was urgently calling its troops over the wireless. However, this company did not reply for fear of betraying its position. Feeling that the attack had miscarried, Lt-Col Pathania ordered his companies to withdraw, and thus Pt. 12967 remained in enemy hands

The second attempt on Batkundi hill was made by 1 Patiala on the night of 7/8 November Lt-Col Sukhdev Singh, MC, the Commanding Officer of 1 Patiala, had earlier sent out patrols which reported that the western portion of Batkundi was quite impossible to climb from the south The attackers in the early hours of the morning of 8 November also found Batkundi impossible to climb from the south, except for a few narrow gullies which were swept with heavy machine gun fire 1 Patiala, therefore, could do no more than 4 Rajput had accomplished earlier, and the hostiles on Batkundi remained unmolested

The advance remained halted for several days longer Winter was already there, and heavy snowfall could stop the operations any day. The weather in the first week of November had remained frosty and clear, but the great freeze-up would not be long delayed, and Dras and Kargil had to be captured before that Lt-Gen Cariappa sent an urgent signal on 9 November to Maj-Gen Thimayya, asking about the progress of the advance and exhorting all troops to hurry on But after the failure of the attack of 1 Patiala on 8 November, it was decided to use tanks against the Pindras position also. Every available man was used to improve the track, and at last by the strenuous efforts of Lt-Col Rajindar Singh and his men, the tanks reached near Pindras on 13 November. They could not advance beyond the broken bridge, but it was decided to utilise their fire-power from the bridge area.[11]

On 13 November, a coy of 1/5 RGR quietly crossed over to Pindras village, and the main attack started the next day. 4 Rajput simply held Batkundi in check by heavy fire, while the Gorkhas and the tanks attacked Pt. 12967 But the hostiles were occupying positions in deep caves and the tanks were unable to advance to fire straight into the cave-mouths So the tanks were not as effective at Pindras as they had been at Zoji La The fire from the tanks and guns, however, kept the hostiles in their caves, and prevented them from inflicting heavy casualties on the Gorkhas.

To break through the strong defences in the Pindras gorge, Brigadier Atal decided to attack again with two battalions. A new plan

OPERATIONS IN KARGIL AREA

20 NOV TO 1 DEC 1948

SCALE OF MILES



KILOMETRES



ADVANCE OF INDIAN FORCES

RAIDERS DISPOSITIONS

RAIDERS RETREAT

MAROL
GAMBAT GANDKS
CHATHATANG
INDUS R.
LEH BRIGADE
BARORO
UTI
GRUGURDO
URDAS
MARMAK
PUNSA
17258
BARBAT
GANGAM
29 NOV
BRIELMAN
JUNKAR
17628
KHARAL
DALUNANG
KIRKITCHI
LUNGTUT
LALU
13620
22 NOV.
SHINGO R.
21 NOV
16760
23 NOV
KARGIL
24 NOV.
SHUNGORA
BUL LA
KOSTA
KURIT
19 NOV
KHARBO
SOMAU
16957
17053
BURUGQU
77 PARA BRIGADE
MAINJIGON
MAMBUR
17481
KHIBAR
SKAMBO
16745
DURKIT
16473
16035
16850
18 NOV
18248
BUTUM
16428
SURU R.
PANDAL
DHARONA
17133
YOGMAGIL
SHERGOL
MULBEKH

was quickly drawn up. 4 Rajput was ordered to contain the hostiles on Batkundi hill and prevent them from interfering with the main attack. The Gorkhas were given the task of capturing the Pt 12967 ridge by assault, while 1 Patiala was to push through along the valley and capture Dras

The plan was brilliantly executed 4 Rajput kept the hostiles on Batkundi occupied with their own defence When the main attack was successful, Batkundi was cut off, its defenders lost heart and ran away, and those who remained were easily mopped up by the Rajputs on 15 November and the following day Pt 12967 also fell at last This long ridge was divided into two objectives, viz, Kumar and Anant, and one coy was sent against each The Gorkhas crossed the stream and hid themselves at the foot of Kumar hill on night of 13/14 November On 14 November, the two Gorkha coys launched a fierce assault on Kumar and Anant. The 3.7-inch mountain guns from Matayan and 3-inch mortars from nearer positions shelled the defences The raiders replied with heavy fire from their MMGs, mortars and automatic weapons But by the morning of 15 November, the Gorkhas captured both Kumar and Anant The hostiles suffered many casualties and left behind large number of rifles and ammunition

The 1 Patiala was equally successful in its attack along the valley Its plan was to advance with one company on either side of the stream running down the narrow valley towards Dras. The troops started off at 1730 hours on 14 November from the Matayan area. They came under fire from the enemy positions on Batkundi, but pushed on relentlessly. The coy on the right came up against a strong position on Brown Hill about midnight The leading platoon found itself only about 25 metres from the main enemy position, and was subjected to intense fire from automatics, and grenades were also thrown at it Most of the men of this platoon were wounded, and their leader, Jemadar Lal Singh, received no less than seven wounds But he and his men continued holding their position for four hours, till dawn came and the whole Patiala coy attacked and captured Brown Hill. The coy on the left bank of the stream also advanced rapidly, brushed aside the weak and stray opposition it met on the way, and occupied the hills overlooking Dras from the north. The raiders fled in confusion, and Brigadier Atal entered Dras in triumph at 1620 hours on 15 November.

THE PURSUIT TO KARGIL

The reoccupation of Dras gave Sri Div a tenable position beyond the Zoji La. General Thimayya could leave a sizable garrison in Dras during the winter months and resume his advance in spring if necessary. But the danger to Leh could not be removed unless Kargil also was recaptured. The Kargil-Marol area controlled routes of the Indus valley, Suru valley and to Zoji La, and Kargil had more accommodation and supplies for a garrison than Dras had. For once the weather also was

proving exceptionally kind. It was decided, therefore, to push on as fast as possible and try to occupy Kargil as well as Marol before the heavy snowfall came.

The problem of supply was the main difficulty in an advance beyond Dras. On 6 November, HQ Sri Div reported to Jammu and Kashmir Corps that the animal transport available to 77 Para Brigade could barely maintain the column upto Dras. To keep up the momentum of the advance, air supply should be arranged at Dras, enough to last 2500 men and 500 animals for six days. First-line ammunition for two infantry battalions and one mountain battery would also be required. Apart from arranging air supply, Thimayya pressed into service every engineer and coolie he could obtain from the State government, and the long line of communication was improved. Pindras became the jeep-head for all supplies within a few days of the capture of Dras, and mules were used to ferry the goods between Pindras and Dras Moreover, Thimayya informed Atal that, of the 54 Dakota-loads of supplies demanded by 77 Para Brigade, half would be delivered at Dras, and the remainder at Kargil, for which Atal "Must go flat out". By dint of these efforts, the advance proceeded unchecked, but the problems of supply continued to worry Brigadier Atal and General Thimayya.

In preparation for the further advance, the duty of protecting the line of communication from Baltal to Pindras was given over to 5 Mahratta 4 Rajput took over from 1 Patiala all the picquets round Dras by 18 November, thus releasing the Patiala troops and the Gorkhas for the dash to Kargil.

These arrangements completed, the advance was resumed on 18 November One coy of 1/5 RGR climbed up towards Umba La in order to reach Kargil via the Suru valley, but it found the track very difficult due to the snow, and had to return to Dras on 20 November. A coy of 1 Patiala advanced down the Dras river valley, and reached Dandal on the evening of 18 November No hostile parties were encountered, and the villagers 'en route' were peaceful and friendly. A few months of life under the raiders regime had cured them of their ignorant fanaticism, and they welcomed the return of Indian troops, though without ostentatious display.

On 19 November, the forward platoons of 1 Patiala occupied Shamsha and Khibar, and reached the major village of Kharbu. About 19 km more were thus covered without meeting any opposition But the next day, the advancing troops were fired upon from a hostile position just north of Kharbu. They also captured a messenger sent by Major Qureshi, the local commander of the raiders, to the village headman of Kharbu, asking for some help. The headlong pursuit was halted, therefore, and 1 Patiala consolidated its hold on Kharbu area and made preparations for overcoming the opposition On 21 November, the hostile position was attacked and captured, and the men of 1 Patiala reached the junction of Dras and Shingo rivers Behind it, the Gorkhas

were also hurrying forward, and by that evening the whole of 1/5 RGR was concentrated at Kharbu. A wooden bridge over the Dras river near Kharbu had been burnt by the retreating hostiles, but the Sappers quickly erected another at the same site. The Gorkhas then took the lead, leaving behind 1 Patiala to form a firm base. B coy of 1/5 RGR advanced along the left bank of the Dras river, while C coy went forward on the main track running along the right bank. The coy on the left bank was soon held up by the Shingo river where it joined the Dras. The Shingo, a deep and ice-cold stream, was unfordable, and the hostiles swept its banks with machine gun fire from their positions to the north of it The Gorkhas of B coy, therefore, handed over that sector to 1 Patiala, came back to Kharbu and crossed over to the right bank of Dras river.

The C coy of 1/5 RGR advancing along the right bank of the Dras made excellent progress It reached within 6 km of Kargil on 22 November, but then it ran into an ambush At Kharal the track to Kargil ran along the lower slopes of a narrow gorge, with the swift stream gliding at the bottom. There was a bridge at Kharal, over which the track went to Marol and onwards to Skardu The advancing Gorkhas, perhaps grown a little careless due to the collapse of enemy opposition and hurrying on to enter Kargil, saw the Kharal bridge lying broken in the water and no enemy in sight They came out in the open Suddenly, a murderous fire burst at them from the opposite bank The hostiles used several LMGs and MMGs from well-concealed positions, and within a few minutes eighteen Gorkhas lay dead or wounded where they stood.

Advance along the main track to Kargil was impossible without destroying the hostile position across the river at Kharal. So, attempts were made the same day, i e 22 November, to cross the Shingo and drive away the raiders Captain A K Kochar, a powerful swimmer, swam across the ice-cold river, but he was completely numb when he reached the far bank and had to revive himself in the humble hut of a friendly villager. Others tried to cross the river on small rafts, but the current proved too swift for them So more planks were obtained from some houses about 5 km away, a bigger raft was built, and B coy of 1/5 RGR began ferrying itself over during the night of 22/23 November. Only one platoon had reached the left bank when the big raft broke up, but this platoon alone charged the hostile position and drove out the raiders. More Gorkhas then came across, and a firm position was established guarding the track from Marol

While this spirited affair was going on at Kharal, another coy of 1/5 RGR was climbing straight up the 4270-metre mountain to reach Kargil by a short-cut. The slopes were steep and craggy, the track hardly existed, and the cold was intense. But the men marched on through most of the night, and entered Kargil at 0400 hours on 23 November. Close at their heels came Brigadier Atal himself with another (D coy)

Gorkha coy The raiders had fled from Kargil, and no opposition was encountered. By the next morning (i e. 24 November) 1/5 RGR held Kargil in strength, and one Gorkha coy guarded the Kharal bridge area to prevent any hostile attack on the track from Dras Col Parab and his Leh Column also reached Kargil on 24 November, as described in the previous chapter The link up with Leh was thus accomplished, and the safety of Ladakh assured

THE LAST MOVES

After capturing Kargil, 77 Para Brigade addressed itself to the task of occupying Marol Marol controlled the routes from Skardu to Leh as well as Kargil, and the strategic advantages of seizing it were obvious November was drawing to a close, but the weather so far had been exceptionally sunny and fair It was decided, therefore, to attempt a dash to Marol before allowing the troops to settle down for the winter

The first obstacle in this advance was the broken bridge over the Shingo river at Kharal Improvised rafts had already proved a failure against the swirling currents of the river So the RIAF dropped two assault boats there on 24 November One of the boats was badly damaged, but the other was used to send one coy of 1/5 RGR across the river on 26 November The hostiles were reported to have fled from the entire area, and speed was of great importance So the Gorkhas pushed on at their best pace towards Marol along the left bank of the Suru river.[12] On 29 November, the Gorkhas were passing through Gangam village when suddenly the leading section was attacked from close quarters, and about 300 hostiles emerged from the hills and tried to encircle the Gorkha column [13] The leading section could not extricate itself, and the hurried atttempts of the main body to rescue it were foiled The column then fell back, losing one killed, one wounded and six missing in the ambush. Fighting patrols were sent out the next day, and discovered another strong raiders' position at Brielman just across the river from Gangam Attempts were made to destroy this position by attacking it from the south and the east, but the Junkar hill and Pt 13620 effectively shielded the hostiles. The failure of the Leh Column trying to reach Marol along the Indus valley has already been described. In the midst of these hurried efforts, the weather finally broke. Heavy snowfall was reported over the whole area. Trucks and jeeps were buried under snow, and the troops working in the open suffered terribly. Snow blizzards screamed through the rocky gorges, the perilous tracks disappeared; arctic winter took the whole region in its icy grasp. All active operations thus came to a standstill, and even then there were over 350 cases of frost-bite [14]

Steps had in fact already been taken by 77 Para Brigade to meet the winter. The plan was to garrison two coys at Marol, one battalion at Kargil and another battalion at Dras All surplus troops were sent back 1 Patiala, for example, began evacuating the forward positions as early

as 23 November, and the whole battalion was concentrated at Srinagar before the month was out It well deserved the highest praise for its prolonged and tenacious defence of the Zoji La area during the dark days of the summer, and for the skill and stamina of its relentless attacks during operations 'Duck' and 'Bison'. The 1/5 RGR formed the garrison of Kargil, 4 Rajput of Dras, and a coy of 5 Mahratta guarded the line of communication from Pindras and Matayan bases The Engineers were also withdrawn from Pindras about the middle of November, in order to save rations The track beyond Pindras could not be made fit for MT in a reasonable time, so the main reliance for supply was placed on mules and aircraft. But only three AT coys were available in 77 Para Brigade Due to the ravages by the raiders and the unsettled conditions, local pack ponies also were not available in sufficient numbers in the Dras-Kargil area Dakotas of the RIAF, however, more than made up for this deficiency, and both Dras and Kargil were well-stocked with supplies and provisions within a very short time. By 21 December 1948, the supply position was as follows.

Dras —stocked with supplies for 68 days for 3000 troops.
Kargil —stocked with supplies for 23 days for 3000 troops
Leh —stocked with supplies for 17 days for 1200 troops.

About this date, i e , 23 December 1948, the units of 77 Para Brigade were stationed as given below

HQ 77 Para Brigade, J & K Mountain Battery (without mules), and 1/5 RGR	—Kargil and surrounding picquets
4 Rajput and one coy 5 Mahratta (less two platoons)	—Dras area
One platoon 5 Mahratta	—Pindras
One platoon 5 Mahratta	—Matayan
Tac HQ "Leh Bde" and one coy 2/8 GR	—Grugurdo
Main HQ "Leh Bde", 2/8 GR (less two coys), one platoon 7 J & K Militia and one platoon SF	—Khalsi
Rear HQ "Leh Bde", one coy 7 J & K Militia, and one platoon 2/4 GR	—Leh
One coy 2/8 GR, two platoons 2/4 GR, and one coy 7 J & K Militia	—Biagdangdo area in Shyok valley
HQ 7 J & K Militia and two coys	—Saspul area in Indus valley

At this time, active operations had already been suspended due to the winter. The war in Jammu and Kashmir remained in suspended animation, or a state of hibernation, on the Northern Front, and the Cease Fire came into effect from 2359 hours on 1 January 1949.

Thus was re-established the link with Ladakh, after many months of anxiety and several gallant attempts. The toll in human misery, of these operations was:

'Operation Duck'

Enemy casualties		—Nil
Indian casualties		
Killed	—23	—Total 115
Wounded	—61	
Missing	—31	

'Operation Bison'

Enemy casualties (estimated)	
Killed	—318
Wounded	—206
Captured	—9
Indian casualties	
Killed	—17
Wounded	—25
Missing	—6
Frost-bite cases	—350

The tank thrust over the Zoji La was certainly the most spectacular operation of the campaign in Jammu and Kashmir. The altitude and terrible reputation of the Himalayan pass, the race against time, and political and strategic importance of the issues at stake made it a unique operation Like most great concepts, the plan of 'Operation Bison' was simple. It succeeded primarily because of its stunning boldness, which took the enemy completely by surprise The fighting qualities of the Indian soldiers of all classes, the skill and efficiency of their commanders at the front as well as at Srinagar and Delhi, and, finally, the kindness of 'Dame Fortune', were elements without which success would have been impossible. The operation amply demonstrated the skill and gallantry of the armour and infantry. The gunners gave an excellent account of themselves, even though they had frequently to place their observation posts at the staggering height of 4875 metres above sea level. On 1 November 1948, the three artillery units fired over 2000 shells on the Zoji La. 51 (Para) Field Battery advanced over the pass upto Gumri, while the J & K Mountain Battery advanced with the column all through and wintered in Kargil itself The supporting arms and services also, specially the Engineers, gave an excellent account of themselves and paved the way for the advance, literally as well as idiomatically.

The operation also revealed the invaluable role of the RIAF and its

scope and limitations The limitations were shown first, when bad weather prevented the planes from supporting the crucial attack on 1 November 1948 and the next day or two But after that the Tempests came over regularly on call, and their fierce attacks with rockets and cannon fire destroyed many hostile positions at Pindras. Even more useful were the Dakotas, which made it possible to stock Dras and to continue the advance to Kargil.

Of the lessons of the operations in the Zoji La area, there were many The technicians in the army learnt much, particularly about the behaviour of arms and equipment at high altitudes and at arctic temperatures. Moreover, the age-old principles of 'surprise' and 'offensive action' were again brought out. It was also brought out that what was normally considered impossible was not impossible when the Indian Army took up the task

Notes

1 This pass is also often called Bot Kulan Ganj, but as 'gali' is an accepted term for a pass or narrow passage, Bot Kulan Gali has been used here as the correct name
2 Another historic route led from Kishtwar along the Warwan valley to Bot Khol and Bol Khol passes and onwards to the Suru valley Covered by the Nun Kun glacier, these passes were 5180 metres high The great Zorawar Singh followed this route with his army in 1833 His 10,000 men carried their supplies and mountain guns on mules, it is said
3 Gen Thimayya has explained that he wanted to use a brigade for this operation One battalion was to hold Burzil-Gurais area, a second battalion to push through the Deosai plain, and the third battalion to relieve Skardu or act as reserve Air supply for the whole brigade for a week was necessary, as after this time the L of C via Dras-Kargil would have been cleared The route across Deosai was plotted by Bakhshi Ghulam Mohd himself, as he had crossed the Deosai many times in his business trips
4 The correct code-name for this operation is not known with certainty War Diary of 3 Jat calls it 'Operation Duck' The account of 1/5 Royal Gorkha Rifles gives it the name of 'Operation Bison', which, however, appears to have been the name of the tank thrust carried out later at Zoji La This last operation is also mentioned as 'Operation Sparrow' by 77 Brigade, which adds to the confusion And no name appears to have been given to the second attempt against Zoji La, made on 13-14 September
5. Gen Thimayya has said that the first patrol sent forward was handled incompetently and was mostly made prisoners by the enemy, thus giving away the whole show and losing all surprise
6 The Commanding Officer of 5 Mahratta had, it appears, stayed behind this time also He was later court-martialled and dismissed
7 Lt-Gen S M Shrinagesh was appointed as Corps Commander for the J&K Ops in the middle of September, responsible for co-ordinating Sri Div, Jammu Div and L of C Area's work He took over the Tac HQ West Comd and no new Corps HQ was established
8 For details of the use of armour over the Zoji La, see the account and comments of Lt-Col Rajindar Singh The decision was taken in a discussion on 23 Sep 48, at the Guest House No 2 in Srinagar, between Lt-Gen Cariappa, Lt-Gen Shrinagesh and Maj-Gen Thimayya, to which Lt-Col Rajindar Singh was specially called

9 5 Mahratta were given the main task of guarding the L of C from Zoji La to the Woyle Bridge, and it took over all the picquets on this route which men of 1 Patiala had been holding for many weeks

10 According to Lt-Col Rajindar Singh, this plan was slightly modified at the last minute

11 For the work of 7 Cav in these operations, see account/comments of Lt-Col Rajindar Singh, its CO It was indeed a remarkable achievement, and indispensable for the success of the Zoji La operations

12 Below the junction of the Dras and the Shingo streams, the river is called the Shingo Below the junction of this river with the Suru, the name of Suru has been used

13 It is said that the fleeing hostiles were stopped near Tolti by their commander—Gilani—and sent back towards Kharal Hence their unexpected reappearance at Gangam

14 The main reason for the large number of frost-bite cases was that the boots were not water-proof Also, the Indian troops had then no knowledge or experience of what to do and what not to do in arctic climate and terrain

In characteristic style which became all too familiar in later years, the Security Council on 17 January 1948, asked both India and Pakistan to refrain from doing or permitting any act which might aggravate the situation, and requested them to inform the Council about any material change that might occur while the matter was under its consideration.[4]

The Security Council thereafter had prolonged discussions, and passed several Resolutions, which proved infructuous, as the parties to the dispute could not be brought to any agreement India insisted that the first step must be stopping of all help to the raiders by Pakistan, withdrawal of all tribesmen and hostile elements from J & K, and restoration of normal conditions She asserted that the J&K State was a part of India by its legal accession, and as such India was responsible for its defence Pakistan, on the other hand, denied giving support to the raiders. Pakistan claimed that the question of accession was still open She linked the cessation of hostilities with the total solution of the problem by a plebiscite under the direct control of the UN after an impartial interim administration was set up in the State The Western powers especially the USA and the UK, influenced by the growing cold war between the two blocs, confused and complicated the Kashmir issue in an effort to increase their own influence over the Indian sub-continent They largely supported the Pakistani viewpoint, and ignored the insistent demand of India for early action to end the invasion

By a Resolution on 21 April 1948, the Security Council made some recommendations about conditions for a Cease Fire, and a plebiscite, besides providing for a Commission of five members to proceed to the Indian sub-continent to place its good offices at the disposal of the two governments with a view to facilitating restoration of peace.[5] Though India and Pakistan rejected the Resolution, they expressed willingness to receive the Commission if it was still appointed by the Security Council [6]

The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), on arrival in the sub-continent in July 1948, found itself confronted with far graver problems than at first envisaged The Pakistan Foreign Minister, during a meeting with the Commission on 8 July, admitted that three Pak Brigades of regular troops had been fighting in Kashmir since May 1948 [7] This belated admission gave unquestioned force to India's complaint to the UN that Pakistan had committed aggression against her Pak excuses, that the troops had been sent as India's spring offensive threatened her security, that she did not want to be faced with a *fait accompli* in Kashmir, and that she wanted to prevent the influx of refugees, were clearly untenable Pakistan had also failed to comply with its obligation to inform the Council of any material change in the situation

But the Commission only appealed to both India and Pakistan, on

15 July, to take measures to improve the situation and to refrain from making statements which might aggravate it [8]

On 13 August 1948, the Commission adopted a Resolution. It provided for a Cease Fire, a Truce Agreement, and consultations for a plebiscite after the Truce Agreement was made. The Commission recognised that Pakistan had violated international law by sending troops into Kashmir, and was also guilty of not informing the UN about the material change in the situation introduced by this action [9] India accepted the Resolution after being assured by the Commission that it recognised the sovereignty of the State government over the whole of J&K, and the right of India to defend the State from external aggression; and did not recognise the right of Pakistan to have any say in the affairs of the State [10] However, Pakistan, though not rejecting it, did not accept the Resolution in effect, as the Commission did not agree to its contentions about the 'Azad Kashmir' government, about the withdrawal of tribesmen only after they were satisfied that the Muslims in the State were safe, etc [11]

On receiving an interim report from the UNCIP about its failure to secure an agreement between the parties, the Security Council on 25 November 1948, unanimously appealed again to India and Pakistan to stop fighting and to do nothing to aggravate the situation, or to endanger the negotiations.[12]

The UNCIP in its efforts to bring about Pakistan's acceptance of its Resolution of 13 August, made a supplementary Resolution on 11 December 1948, detailing steps to be taken after the Cease Fire to satisfy the conflicting demands of India and Pakistan. India accepted the proposals after certain clarifications had been given by the UNCIP

The supplementary Resolution did not offer any substantial concessions to Pakistan, but she was obliged to accept it because of the military situation in Kashmir and political developments in the sub-continent. There was a marked improvement in India's military position in Kashmir during the autumn of 1948 The lifting of the siege of Punch in November 1948, was a great setback for Pakistan An even heavier blow was the loss of the Zoji La-Kargil region. The successful Police Action by India against Hyderabad in September 1948 had released sizable Indian forces for deployment in J&K or in the Punjab, if absolutely necessary. The death of Quaid-e-Azam, Jinnah, in September 1948, had introduced an element of political instability in Pakistan There was also a heavy drain on Pakistan's limited financial resources, and her industrial and military infrastructure could not cope with a protracted war.

So, even before the UNCIP formally adopted on 5 January 1949, its supplementary proposals, a Cease Fire became effective at 2359 hours, before the mid-night of 1–2 January 1949 [13]

Subsequently, the Commission invited the representatives of the

two governments for a joint meeting to demarcate the Cease Fire Line. The meeting took place at Karachi from 18 to 27 July 1949, under the auspices of the Commission's Truce Sub-Committee An agreement on the Cease Fire Line was signed, and the CFL continued to exist till it was supplanted by the Line of Actual Control after the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971 [14]

It has been stated that the orders to cease fire came as a surprise even to the senior military commanders concerned with the J&K operations Negotiations at the UN had been going on for a year, and Cease Fire had been proposed But those responsible for the actual operations wished they had been warned sufficiently in advance that the government had decided to accept a Cease Fire from a particular hour There is no doubt that a longer period of warning or advance notice would have enabled the troops to make small advances and take up tactically much better positions before the Cease Fire took effect But Pakistan agreed to the Cease Fire only at the last minute, making it impossible for the Government of India to give more time to her commanders

The enemy managed to occupy a few tactical positions near the Cease Fire Line even after the end of the fighting. For example, it is claimed that there were no hostile troops south of the Burzil Pass on 1 January 1949, but when the snows melted, the Pakistanis quickly came across the pass, and occupied the ground up to a few kilometres from Gurais itself In the Kargil sector also, the hill positions overlooking Kargil town and commanding the Kargil-Leh road were occupied by the enemy long after the Cease Fire A greater alertness on the part of junior Indian officers on the spot could have prevented these illegal encroachments In the alternative, if they had greater initiative and freedom of action, they could have forced the enemy to vacate these encroachments as soon as they were reported But then these typical Pakistani tactics were not as familiar in 1949 as they became later

PROSPECTS AT CEASE FIRE

Another aspect of the Cease Fire deserves consideration here There is a feeling among some Service officers, as well as a section of the civilian population, that India should not have accepted the Cease Fire or any Cease Fire Line, and should have pressed on to liberate the rest of the territories of J & K State It is argued that the liberation of the remaining areas of J & K was only a matter of a few weeks, and the political decision to have a Cease Fire robbed the Indian Army and the Royal Indian Air Force of a quick and decisive victory in J & K. These opinions are wide-spread enough to demand notice, and some senior army officers who took part in these operations have also urged a

discussion of this matter in this detailed history of the operations in J & K

The question being essentially hypothetical, no definitive answer is possible. However, the facts brought out in the following paragraphs might throw some light on the answer

As already described, the Indian Army, supported by the Air Force, won several major victories in the last few months of operations before the Cease Fire The long siege of Punch was finally broken, and the valiant garrison linked up with Rajauri and Jammu. The Zoji La was also broken through, leading to the recapture of Dras and Kargil and the reopening of the vital route from Srinagar to Leh These defeats, however, did not break the back of enemy resistance. The enemy suffered casualties, as did the Indian forces, but there were no—there could not be any—large enveloping movements, leading to considerable bodies of enemy troops being captured and enemy strength decimated The invaders managed to fall back on their bases of Palandri and Skardu. They must have suffered some demoralisation, but, on the other hand, the Indian forces had inevitably spent their initial momentum of attack, extended their supply lines and used up their immediate stocks of food and ammunition In the Kargil sector at least, the first requirement was to stock up Dras, Kargil and Leh before the Zoji La was closed by winter snows It is safe to conclude, therefore, that a certain pause, or breathing space, was inevitable before pressing the attacks further towards Rawalkot, Palandri or Skardu

But could not other attacks be launched immediately, say from Gurais, Tithwal and Rajauri, to liberate the enemy-held areas of J&K ? The answer is clearly in the negative, unless more troops were brought into J & K from the rest of India. The magnitude of the undertaking might be judged from the fact that an entire infantry division, with four infantry brigades and full complement of artillery, armour etc , was estimated to be required for the recapture of Bhimbar and Mirpur alone. No such force could possibly be spared from within the J & K theatre. As detailed later in this chapter, the enemy had in December 1948 two infantry divisions of the regular Pakistan Army, and one infantry division of the so-called "Azad Kashmir Army" fighting in the theatre These comprised fourteen infantry brigades; or 23 infantry battalions of the Pakistan Army and 40 infantry battalions of "Azad Kashmir", besides 19000 scouts and irregulars. Against this, the Indian Army had in J & K only two infantry divisions, comprising twelve infantry brigades; a total of some 50 infantry battalions of the regular army and the Indian States Forces, plus 12 battalions of the J & K Militia (some with only two companies) and 2 battalions of the East Punjab Militia.

The rival strengths are compared in the table below:-

Forces in J&K, December 1948

Forces	India	Pakistan
Div HQ	Two	Three
Infantry Brigades	Twelve	Fourteen
Infantry Battalions (including ISF or "Azad Kashmir")	Fifty	Sixty-three
Militia, Scouts battalions or irregulars	Fourteen	Twenty-four (@ 800 men per battalion)

Even if the above statement of comparative strength is taken as approximately correct, it is clear that Indian forces were definitely outnumbered by the enemy in J & K, and only the superior valour and skill, and perhaps fire-power, together with the invaluable help from the tiny Air Force, enabled the Indian Army to maintain its superiority on the battlefields. There can be no doubt, however, that any major offensive required more Indian troops in J & K.

The position regarding further Indian reinforcements for J & K was none too comfortable Infantry was the basic requirement in the mountainous terrain, and infantry units of the Indian Army were fairly fully occupied elsewhere. About the end of 1948, there were 127 infantry battalions of the Indian Army, including Parachute and Gorkha battalions and State Forces units serving with the Indian Army, but excluding Garrison battalions and companies. Of these 127, some fifty battalions were already in J & K Twenty-nine battalions were in the East Punjab, guarding the vital sector of the Indo-Pakistan frontier. Nineteen battalions were stationed in the Hyderabad area, where the Razakars still posed a potential threat to law and order and the Military Governor required strong forces at hand to complete his task of pacifying the area [15] There were thus only twenty-nine battalions available for internal security, to guard the thousands of kilometres of frontier, and to act as the general reserve

By scraping the barrel, more forces could certainly be despatched to J & K But this would have accentuated the supply problem, as the entire force in J & K had to be maintained by a single rail-head, and a single road This road was long and weak, and had numerous narrow bridges with which few liberties could be taken.

While logistics put a definite limit to the size of the forces that India could maintain in J & K, Pakistan suffered from no such limitation. There were numerous roads from Pakistan bases to the J & K border, and from there the actual front-line was generally accessible by short tracks or roads So there was no maintenance problem for whatever

reinforcements Pakistan could send to her forces in J & K to block any Indian advance.

Indian forces, therefore, had to operate in J & K under a definite and severe handicap. The enemy could not be beaten decisively by local action within the boundaries of J & K. For decisive victory, it was necessary to bring Pakistan to battle on the broad plains of the Punjab itself; the battle of J & K, in the last analysis, had to be fought and won at Lahore and Sialkot, as events brought home in 1965. So, if the whole of J & K had to be liberated from the enemy, a general war against Pakistan was necessary. There can be hardly any doubt that Pakistan could be decisively defeated in a general war in 1948-49, although both the Indian and the Pakistan armies were in the throes of partition and reorganization then

But that was a much wider question, and rightly or wrongly, the government did not decide to have a general war with Pakistan. Nehru, the apostle of peace, must have hoped that Pakistan's aggression on Kashmir would prove a temporary aberration, that all enemy forces would be peacefully withdrawn from the State under the impartial advice of the UN, and that India and Pakistan would live ever afterwards as close and friendly neighbours It was a vision worth pursuing, even though it finally proved a mere illusion

BUILD-UP OF FORCES

As mentioned earlier in Chapter III, there had been no previous plans whatsoever to send Indian troops to Jammu & Kashmir, and the operation was mounted on an impromptu basis on the spur of the moment. When the raiders were advancing rapidly on Srinagar, and the Maharaja appealed urgently for help, Army HQ was instructed on 26 October 1947 to send an infantry battalion to Srinagar as early as possible [16] There was then an infantry battalion of the Madras Regiment stationed in Delhi. But the commanding officer of this battalion was a British national, and political complications were anticipated if a Commonwealth officer was sent to fight against the Pakistani raiders [17] So the honour of saving Srinagar fell on 1 Sikh, which had an Indian CO (Lt-Col D.R Rai) and was stationed at Gurgaon.

1 Sikh landed at Srinagar on 27 October The gravity of the enemy threat quickly became clear, underlined by the death of Lt-Col Rai on the battlefield on 28 October. The Indian Government issued instructions the same day for a brigade group to be sent to Jammu, and for the troops at Srinagar to be built up to another brigade group Accordingly, Tac HQ, 161 Inf Bde, commanded by Brig J.C. Katoch, was opened at the Srinagar airfield on 29 October On 31 October, HQ 50 Para Bde, commanded by Brig Y S. Paranjape, opened at Jammu, though it had at the moment only two companies of 3 (Para) Rajput and two companies of 1/2 Punjab under command. The two brigades, 161 Inf Bde and 50 Para Bde, were soon constituted as the JAK Force, later known as JAK

Division Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh assumed command of the new Force on 5 November 1947

In the succeeding days, more battalions reached Srinagar and Jammu to bring the two brigades to full strength When 50 Para Bde was sent out from Jammu to relieve the besieged garrisons and thousands of refugees in the Jhangar-Kotli area, another brigade was required to protect Jammu and the vital L of C from Pathankot. On 17 November 1947, HQ 268 Inf Bde was formed at Jammu and took over the protection of L of C from Kathua to Jammu, Jammu to Banihal Pass, and Jammu to Beri Pattan.

The higher command echelons of the Indian Army in 1947-48 were still manned almost exclusively by British officers JAK Force came under Delhi and East Punjab Command, which later became the Western Command. The GOC-in-C, DEP Command was Lt-Gen Sir Dudley Russell, DSO, MC, a distinguished soldier affectionately nick-named Russell Pasha. DEP Command located at New Delhi received orders from the Army HQ headed by Gen Sir Roy Bucher, C-in-C of the Indian Army The senior-most Indian officer, Maj-Gen K M. Cariappa, was then the Chief of the General Staff at Army HQ. It was only on 18 January 1948 that Cariappa took over the DEP Command with the rank of Lt-General. In March 1948 he opened a Tac HQ DEP/Western Command at Jammu in order to exercise a closer control and supervision of the operations in the J & K theatre

On 13 December 1947, another brigade was inducted into the theatre, and HQ 80 Inf Bde opened in Jammu. This Bde was made responsible for the Akhnur-Chhamb sector and moved to Akhnur on 14 December 1947. There were now three brigades in the Jammu area, namely 50 Para Bde, 268 Inf Bde and 80 Inf Bde The 50 Para Bde was operating forward in Naushahra area, while 268 Inf Bde protected the lines of communication radiating from Jammu Operations in the entire Kashmir Valley were carried out by a single brigade, viz, 161 Inf Bde.

In January 1948, the enemy gravely threatened the Samba-Jasmergarh area near Kathua on the main L of C of the Indian forces in J & K No troops could be spared from forward areas, so 77 Para Bde commanded by Brig P Sankaran Nair was moved from Punjab to Jasmergarh on 28 January 1948. On 8 February 1948, 19 Inf Bde Group was also brought in and sent to Naushahra. At the same time, a formation called Z Bde was established at Srinagar under Brig Lakhinder Singh for taking charge of the operations over the extensive area Handwara, Bandipur, Skardu and Leh Later on it became the 163 Inf Bde The Punch garrison was also renamed Punch Bde in February 1948, and was later known as 101 Bde, and finally, 168 Bde

Maj-Gen Kalwant Singh thus had some eight brigades under him by March 1948. This was too large a force to be conveniently handled by a single divisional headquarters. The area of operations also extended over hundreds of kilometres of hills and valleys, from Kathua to

Bandipur and from Punch to Skardu The front-line ran from Chhamb about 640 km to Kargil More intensive fighting was bound to start with spring, requiring the Divisional Commander's personal supervision and close coordination. Early in May 1948, therefore, JAK Div was split up into two, with a Jammu Div under Maj-Gen Atma Singh and a Sri Div under Maj-Gen K S Thimayya, DSO

The enemy also made full preparations for the summer campaign. Pakistan had been actively helping the raiders since the very beginning with arms, signal and transport equipment, and trained officers and men. It soon ordered its regular army into J & K, while denying loudly before the UN any such move. The *7 Inf Div* of the Pakistan Army, commanded by Maj-Gen F J Loftus-Tottenham, joined battle surreptitiously in March-April 1948. In June 1948, the *9 Frontier Division* of the Pakistan Army, under Maj-Gen Nazir Ahmad, was also thrown into battle in the Uri-Tithwal sector. These two elite divisions comprised five brigades, namely, *10 Inf Bde, 25 Inf Bde, 100 Inf Bde, 101 Inf Bde,* and *102 Inf Bde.* Besides these regular formations, there were many thousands of the so-called Azad Kashmir troops, fully equipped and trained by Pakistan [18]

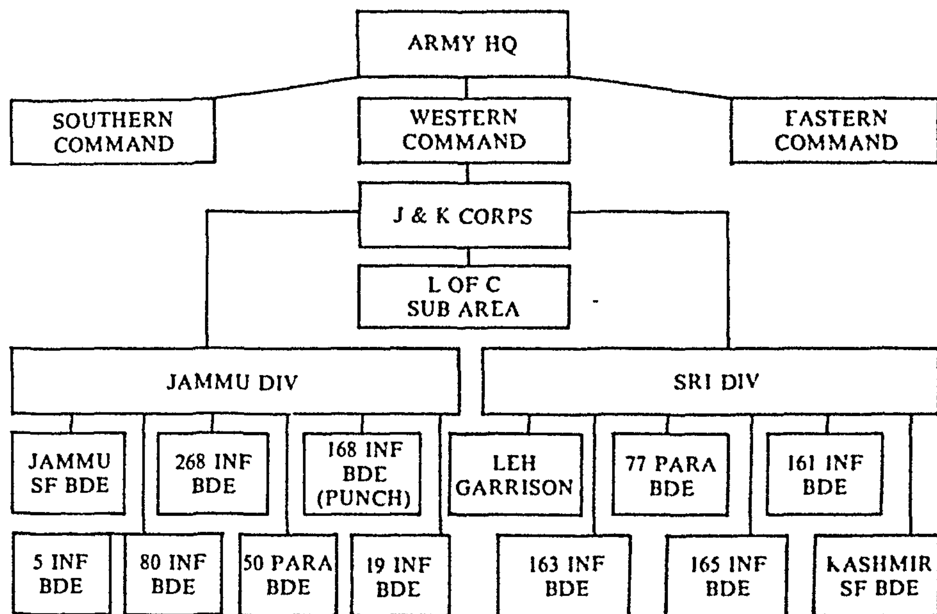
Sri Div and Jammu Div carried on throughout the hard-fought battles of the summer of 1948 with the eight brigades already mentioned The isolated Leh garrison was indeed named the Leh Brigade for some months during the summer, and the remnants of the J & K State Forces were reorganised into the Jammu Bde and Kashmir Bde, but it meant hardly any addition of fighting strength in the theatre.

For some time a need was being felt for a higher headquarters to coordinate the operations of Jammu Div and Sri Div A L of C Sub-Area under Brig Jai Singh had also started functioning at Jammu in early May 1948. The L of C Sub-Area was concerned with the maintenance of the entire force in the J & K theatre, and had the responsibility of the L of C from Pathankot to Srinagar and from Jammu to Naushahra, including the administration of Pathankot Base. To coordinate the operations of the two divisions and to exercise immediate supervision over them and the L of C Sub-Area, a Corps HQ was opened at Udhampur in September 1948 under Lt-Gen S.M. Shrinagesh It was called J & K Corps; later the name was changed to 5 Corps.

Two more infantry brigades had to be moved into the J & K theatre soon after the creation of the Corps HQ. These were the 5 Inf Bde commanded by Brig Umrao Singh, and 165 Inf Bde commanded by Brig Gurdip Singh, which arrived near Uri on 8 October 1948. The 5 Inf Bde took active part in the final link up with Punch in November 1948 The 165 Inf Bde took over a part of the heavy defensive responsibilities from 161 Inf Bde in the Uri area, but was given no opportunity for large-scale operations

At the concluding stage of the operations in J & K, therefore, the

Indian Command organisation was as shown below:



Against these twelve brigades, the enemy Order of Battle comprised the following [19]

Div HQ of regular Pakistan Army	—Two
Div HQ of "Azad Kashmir" Forces	—One
These three Divisions comprised·	
Bdes of regular Pakistan Army	—Seven
Bdes of "Azad Kashmir" Forces	—Seven

The number of regular Pakistani brigades had gone up to seven when *14 Para Bde* commanded by Brig Sher Ali and *3 Armoured Brigade* under Brig K M Idris were thrown into the J & K operations in the last few months of the fighting Besides the *7 Inf Div* and *9 Frontier Div*, formations of the *8 Inf Div* of the Pakistan Army were also thus engaged in J & K operations, apart from some 4000 men of the Gilgit Scouts and Chitral Body Guards, and over 15000 tribal raiders. The "Azad Kashmir" troops alone totalled 40 infantry battalions The enemy forces, therefore, enjoyed clear numerical superiority over the Indian troops deployed in J & K State, as already mentioned

A TRIBUTE

The large scale operations in Jammu and Kashmir were planned, directed and conducted almost entirely by Indian officers. The few British officers still holding some senior appointments in India gave some advice and assistance only in the first few months of the operations The Indian officers of whom Cariappa was the senior most, had till then little experience in the higher planning and conduct of war. It is a remarkable evidence of their high calibre and professional compe-

tence that they managed so well the long campaign which took place in exceptionally difficult circumstances

As already related, there had been no previous planning at all for any military action in J & K The first troops were flown to Srinagar with hardly a couple of days' planning and preparation The liberation of the Valley in early November 1947, was a splendid feat of arms by 161 Brigade fighting against hordes of raiders This single brigade managed to hold its own throughout the long winter of 1947-48 when its only L of C was blocked by snow Large areas in the Tithwal, Naushahra and Rajauri sectors were liberated from the invaders, and were held against repeated heavy attacks by vastly superior numbers of the enemy. Naturally, the Indian Army also suffered setbacks, minor and major, at several places such as Jhangar, Pandu, Kargil and Skardu But the situation was fully restored at Jhangar and Kargil The long siege of Punch was finally broken and Gurais and Dras areas were successfully recaptured against tremendous odds The Army won five Param Vir Chakra, forty-seven Maha Vir Chakra and not less than 284 Vir Chakra awards, including three twin-awards of Vir Chakra, during the J & K Operations, 1947-48.

During the long campaign, the Indian Army lost 76 officers, 31 JCOs and 996 Other Ranks killed, making a total of 1103 The wounded totalled 3152, including 81 officers and 107 JCOs Apart from these casualties, it appears that the J & K State Forces lost no less than 1990 officers and men killed, died of wounds, or missing presumed killed The small RIAF lost a total of 32 officers and men who laid down their lives for the nation during these operations In this roll of honour, there were no less than 9 officers The enemy casualties were definitely many times the total of Indian Army and RIAF casualties, and one estimate concluded that the enemy suffered 20,000 casualties, including 6,000 killed.[20]

The gallantry and skill of all ranks of the Indian Army are amply borne out in the foregoing account of these operations But the exploits and the vital role of the Royal Indian Air Force deserve special mention here. Its contribution to the success of the J & K operations cannot be over emphasised, and it was the one weapon to which the enemy had no answer, as the Pakistan Air Force wisely desisted from joining the fray

Only the impromptu air lift to Srinagar in October 1947, saved the Kashmir Valley A hundred planes landed every day on the improvised airfield at Srinagar, bringing in troops, ammunition and supplies and evacuating casualties and the refugees The air force and civilian pilots of these Dakotas defied the mountains, the weather, and fatigue, to continue the airlift till the valley was saved Leh and the entire Ladakh region was saved by Air Cmde Mehar Singh and his gallant boys; Mehar Singh himself landing the first Dakota at the hastily prepared and untested air strip at Leh Flight Lieutenant D E Pushong similarly landed the first Dakota at Punch, and made almost a hundred

landings thereafter, bringing in, often under enemy shelling, the urgently needed 25 pounder gun and essential supplies Sqn Leader V P. Hegde, Flight Lieutenant L S Grewal and Flight Lieutenant D.N. Ghadiok were among the many other transport pilots who supplied the hard-pressed garrisons in Punch, Tithwal, Dras, Kargil, Leh etc. in innumerable sorties, in spite of getting hit many times by enemy ground fire They all received the Vir Chakra award for their skill, dedication and gallantry.

In the close support role, intrepid fighter pilots like Sqn Ldr D Subia and Sqn Ldr R S. Kalayaniwala accurately and repeatedly attacked enemy positions at Gurais, Zoji La, Pindras, Rajauri etc., winning many Vir Chakra awards. One can well imagine the skill and courage required to hit pin-point targets, among high hills and deep valleys, in the face of heavy machine gun fire. Though Skardu could not be maintained by air supply and fell after six months of siege when ammunition was totally exhausted, and tough inclement weather over the high hills sometimes kept the planes grounded, the overall performance of the RIAF was superb indeed Not only Air Cmde Mehar Singh, the AOC No 1 Group RIAF controlling all the air operations in J & K, but also Wg Cdr M.M Engineer, Wg Cdr H Moolgavkar and Wg Cdr S B Noronha were honoured with the MVC for this superb performance and their vitally important contribution to it The RIAF won, in all, four Maha Vir Chakra and 28 Vir Chakra awards in operations in J & K in 1947-48

Apart from the army and the air force, even civilians acted like heroes in these operations The dedication and skill of the civilian pilots flying to Srinagar in October 1947, have already been noted But few might be aware that a civilian Dhobi (washerman), Ram Chander, won a MVC for rescuing an officer wounded during an ambush, shooting down several enemy troops in the process Another civilian, a porter named M Ismail, also won a MVC for similar heroism on the Zoji La front, while another porter Zuma Mohammad received the Vir Chakra for saving the life of Lt-Col M M Khanna when he was severely wounded in an enemy ambush near Pandu

Thus in the very first military campaign forced on India after her Independence and Partition, her totally unprepared armed forces and many civilians gave an account of themselves of which any nation may feel proud Her good old sword, the world saw, was still not rusted And this ancient land of sages was also the land of heroes

Notes

1 *Gupta, Sisir, Kashmir—A Study in India-Pak Relations*, p 135
2 U N Secretary Council Official Records (U N S C O R) 1948—*3rd Year—Supplement —and Special Supplement*—Supplement for November 1948, p 143
3 *Ibid* , pp 67-75
4 *U N S C Resolutions and Decisions—1948*, p 2
5 *Ibid* , pp 3–8 Also *Year Book of the U N 1947–48*, pp 396–97
6 *Year Book of the U N 1947-48*, pp 398-99

7 U N S C O R -1948—*3rd Year-Supplement and Special Supplement*—Supplement for November 1948, p 25

8 *Ibid* , pp 127-128

9 *Ibid,* pp 32–34

10 *Ibid*, pp 34–37

11 *Ibid*, pp 91 & 136–39

12 *Ibid*, p 26

13 *Year Book of the U N 1948-49,* p 281

14 U N S C O R —1949—*4th Year—Supplement and Special Supplement*—Supplement No 7, December 1949, pp 126–129

15 The Police Action against Hyderabad was undertaken only in September 1948 From 15 August 1947 to September 1948, the Indian Army was fully stretched and overloaded with pressing commitments, first in regard to reorganisation and partition of regiments and the movements of millions of refugees across the Pakistan frontier, and then to counter the grave threat from the Razakar-dominated ruling clique of Hyderabad

16 According to the White Paper issued on the subject, the first instruction to plan to send troops to J & K was issued to Army Headquarters on 25 October 1947

17 Comments of Lt-Gen Kalwant Singh

18 See Maj-Gen Fazal Muqeem Khan, *The Story of the Pakistan Army*, Karachi, 1963

19 *Ibid*

20 Longer, p 317

APPENDIX I

PAK AGGRESSION ON J & K

In late 1947 and early 1948, Pakistan declared repeatedly and vehemently that the fighting in Jammu and Kashmir was purely a rebellion of the Muslim subjects of the State against the Hindu Maharaja, and that Pakistan had nothing to do with it The eminent jurist and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sir Mohd Zafrullah Khan, told the U N the same thing at first, and later admitted the involvement of the Pakistan Army only from May 1948 But these statements were blatant lies The Indian charge that Pakistan was the moving spirit and abettor of the raiders in Kashmir was absolutely correct Apart from the proofs given in the text in this History, this is now established beyond any shadow of doubt on the evidence of Pakistani Generals themselves published in the last few years

Maj-Gen Mohd Akbar Khan, DSO, who was in active service in the Pakistan Army then and commanded the raiders under the pseudonym "Gen Tariq", has proudly narrated in detail his participation in the fighting in J & K since November 1947 His memoirs entitled "Raiders in Kashmir" (Pak Publishers, Karachi, 1970) and his interview published in the "Defence Journal" (Karachi, June-July, 1985), and the memoirs of Gen Mohd. Musa (who became C-in-C of the Pakistan Army) entitled "Jawan to General The Recollections of a Pakistani Soldier" (ABC Publishers, New Delhi, 1985) are explicit. These statements, coming straight from the horses' mouth, give the lie to Pakistan's stout denials Some extracts from the interview of Gen Akbar Khan and from the memoirs of Gen Musa are re-produced below

Extracts from Maj-Gen Akbar Khan's Interview

Brig (Retd) A.R. Siddiqi: Can you recall the earlier stages of the Kashmir operations before you took over?

Mohammad Akbar Khan: "A few weeks after Partition, I was asked by Mian Iftikharuddin on behalf of Liaquat Ali Khan (Prime Minister of Pakistan) to prepare a plan for action in Kashmir I found that the Army was holding 4,000 rifles for the civil police. If these could be given to the locals an armed uprising in Kashmir could be organised at suitable places, I wrote a plan on this basis and gave it to Mian Iftikharuddin I was called to a meeting with Liaquat Ali Khan at Lahore where the plan was adopted, responsibilities allotted and orders issued Everything was to be kept secret from the Army

In September the 4,000 rifles were issued at various places and the first shots were exchanged with the Maharajah's troops and the movement gathered weight

On the 24th of October a tribal lashkar attacked Muzaffarabad

and successfully captured it The next day they advanced and captured Uri On the 26th they occupied Baramula On the 27th Maharajah fled from Srinagar and acceded to India That evening Liaquat Ali Khan held a meeting at Lahore to which I was invited. This was to consider what action to take in view of the expected Indian intervention in Kashmir I proposed that a tribal lashkar should attack Jammu as this was the focal point through which Indian troops would be going to Kashmir This proposal was not accepted for fear of provoking war. That evening the Quaid-e-Azam was also in Lahore and according to Alan Campbell in *Mission with Mountbatten* the Quaid had ordered that Jammu should be attacked by the Army. But this order was not carried out

Two days later on my own initiative I went to the Srinagar front to see how the tribesmen were doing. They were at the 4th milestone from Srinagar held up by a roadblock with a machine gun I carried out a thorough reconnaissance and saw that the town was surrounded by water which blocked entrance from outside However, the roadblock could be overcome by an armoured car. I rushed back to Pindi and soon found that Colonel Masud with three armoured cars was willing to go as volunteer in plain clothes. Then I rang up Karachi and spoke to Raja Ghanzanfar (sic) Ali Khan (Minister for Kashmir Affairs) to ask for permission Permission was refused Thus no help went to the tribesmen and they remained held up at the milestone.

A week later, finding the ground unsuitable for their tactics they broke off engagement and withdrew to Uri, from where also they threatened to withdraw to Abbottabad An Indian brigade advanced from Srinagar and occupied Baramula. It was at this stage that I was earnestly requested to go to Uri and restore the fighting."

ARS How good had been the performance of the tribal lashkars? It is believed that they broke their ranks and went for loot just when they were within sight of Srinagar?

MAK: "The performance of the tribal lashkars had been excellent where the ground was suitable for their sniping and hit-and-run tactics It is not correct to say that they broke their ranks and went for loot just when they were within sight of Srinagar

It was part of their agreement with Major Khurshid Anwar of the Muslim League National Guards who was their leader that they would loot non-Muslims They had no other remuneration. Major Khurshid Anwar had been an emergency commissioned officer in World War II in the Supply Corps of the Indian Army Then he had joined the Muslim League and he had been appointed commander of the Muslim League National Guards In September 1947, when the Prime Minister launched the movement of the Kashmir struggle Khurshid Anwar was appointed commander of the Northern Sector Khurshid Anwar then went to Peshawar and with the apparent help of Khan Qayyum Khan raised the lashkar which assembled at Abbottabad and with which he entered Muzaffarabad on the 24th of October 1947—reached Baramula

where he delayed the lashkar for two days for some unknown reason

Two weeks later, he left the Kashmir front departing from Uri with the lashkar in the first week of November It was after this that I arrived on the scene and began again where the tribesmen had left.

Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan had apparently helped Major Khurshid Anwar with the raising of the lashkar on the frontier Thereafter he continued to take active interest in Kashmir and helped with the tribal lashkars thronged (*sic*—through?) the Kashmir operations "

ARS: How long did you stay on the Kashmir front and what major operations did you fight there?

MAK: "I stayed on the Kashmir front for six months to begin with and then went away for one month to Kohat to take over command of my brigade and came back to the Uri front with my brigade to meet the Indian offensive There I remained till ceasefire in December, 1948." ..

"We burnt the bridge at Uri and I raided (sic) and armed with rifles local ex-servicemen who kept the Indians under fire. In a fortnight the tribesmen returned to the front and agreed to all my conditions Under my direction they successfully ambushed a military convoy between Uri and Punch and burnt 36 vehicles. Then I got the tribesmen to surround Uri and keep it under sniping fire so as to prevent them from moving forward".. .

"We overwhelmed the garrison at Bagh and took control of the tehsil We sent a lashkar to surround and isolate Punch from Srinagar. We captured Kotli, Mirpur, Beri Pattan and the whole area both sides of the road between Jammu and Punch " .

"In May'48 the Indians mounted an offensive on the Uri front with a division." "In six weeks fighting we brought the offensive to a stand still at Chakoti. In August I counter-attacked and captured Pandu, taking a hundred square miles " .

ARS: Would you give a brief description of the top civil and military leadership of Pakistan's earliest years?

MAK: ". . The mantle of leadership thus fell on Liaquat Ali Khan who was the prime minister He was a man of moderate temperament and pleasant enough to work with It was on his behest that I prepared a plan for the conduct of the struggle in Kashmir which he accepted and launched the movement But thereafter, for reasons which are beyond my comprehension, he showed hesitation in the conduct of the operations thus losing several opportunities by not taking steps where necessary, and accepting a Cease Fire when we were at a disadvantage after the loss of Punch.". ..

"When in 1947 the liberation movement started in Kashmir and I was conducting operations in Kashmir, he (Air Cmdc Janjua) visited me there and gave me enthusiastic encouragement and assistance in the shape of clothing and ammunition from the Air Force depots without permission from the Air C-in-C "

Extracts from Gen Musa's memoirs

"One morning, immediately after India's intervention in Kashmir Colonel Mohammad Akbar Khan, who was then Director of Weapons and Equipment in General Headquarters, visited Lahore He told me they were badly in need of some bren guns along with their crew for the protection of Kohala and one of the other bridges on the Jhelum river against Indian air attacks and asked me to send them to him unofficially as soon as possible These crossings (into J & K territory) were vital for Pakistan Without the Area Commander's permission, I instructed Lieutenant-Colonel Khalid Jan, Commandant of one of our infantry battalions, to send four detachments to Rawalpindi, whence they would be taken to their destination Ostensibly, the crew were to proceed on leave to cover their absence from the unit. Initially, he hesitated, but did not waste much time in making the necessary arrangements after recovering from the impact of such an unorthodox command The bren gunners reached Rawalpindi in the same night, accompanied by the battalion Subedar-Major.

Before hostilities broke out in Kashmir, Indian Western Command messages to their Brigade at Gurdaspur, which worked in cooperation with us in refugee matters and was commanded by Brigadier Branjbe (sic), were routed through our signal office At the end of the conference of senior generals of the two countries, I told our cypher officer Lieutenant Qaiser Beg, to decode all cypher messages to that formation and pass them on to the addressee if they related merely to its normal functions The messages concerning other matters were to be held up and shown to me for necessary action I feared that, should India decide to intervene in Kashmir, her troops in Gurdaspur, being nearest to the State border, would very likely be among the leading elements that would be sent there

I finished my work just before midnight and returned to my quarter in Napier Hotel I had hardly sat down when Qaiser Beg knocked at the door and came in with a lengthy signal message, which he handed over to me He seemed to think that I had intuitively directed him only a few hours earlier not to release Indian coded communications without scrutinising them The message contained Operational Instructions by the Western Command at Jullundhar for the move of the brigade to Kashmir valley It was to be airlifted, one battalion at a time. The 1st Battalion of the 11 (sic) Sikh Regiment was to be flown in the first echelon with the object of protecting Srinagar airfield I wondered why such an important message was routed through Lahore May be, the sender did not appreciate the security aspect of it, or despatched it in that manner by mistake With these thoughts in my mind, I went to Brigadier Nazir Ahmed's house to discuss the unexpected development with him. He was delighted to know that it had been intercepted We decided to inform the Director of Military Operations (the late Brigadier Mohammad Sher Khan) by telephone At about 1 a m I

spoke to him in Pashtu from Nazir Ahmed's residence and gave him the gist of the operation India had planned

Brigadier Nazir suggested that the document should be shown to Chaudhari Mohammad Ali, Secretary-General of the Cabinet, who was then in Lahore We went to his house He had gone to bed. His servant declined to disturb him We, therefore, left a message for him and came away. The message was either not delivered to him or he himself did not attach any importance to it, because, as far as I am aware, no action was taken on it.

Western Command orders to Branjbe (sic) were thus delayed by about twenty-four hours. It seemed that these were conveyed to him direct when it was suspected or discovered that the original instructions had not reached him

This development and the manner in which light machine guns were sent to Rawalpindi from Lahore with their crew for the protection of Jhelum river bridges highlight our plight in Kashmir It seems that the tribesmen, who had gone there to help the Muslim population of the State in their revolt against their ruthless oppressors and in resisting their tyranny, were not properly guided by the so-called leaders, who were actuated by personal motives of self-glorification Our senior commanders were not taken into confidence by them Two of the Brigade Commanders in Lahore Area, Iftikhar and Nazir, who were among the first three Pakistanis to be promoted Major-General a few months after partition, were also not consulted by the self-appointed leaders about these matters They used to inquire from me if I was aware of what was happening in Kashmir, but my knowledge of the so-called tribal incursion was also sketchy "

No comment is required on these admissions

APPENDIX II

DEP COMD OP INSTRUCTION NO 3, 27 OCT 47

To
Lt Col RAI, 1 Sikh

Infm

1. It is understood KASHMIR is acceding to the INDIAN UNION and that SHEIKH ABDULLAH is being invited to form a popular Govt

2 Tribesmen, numbers and arms unknown but reliably reported to be in large numbers, reported moving on SRINAGAR from W and NW areas of state Situation in SRINAGAR reliably reported 26 OCT to be deteriorating

3 AHQ (I) is giving assistance to KASHMIR This takes the form of a two phased operation.

Phase 1. fly in a Bn gp to SRINAGAR

Phase 2. move a bde gp to JAMMU via PATHANKOT

Tasks

4. You will fly to SRINAGAR ex PALAM and WILLINGDON 27 OCT. On arrival SRINAGAR you will

(a) secure SRINAGAR airport and civil aviation wireless station

(b) take such action as your first task and available troops allow to

(i) drive tribesmen away from SRINAGAR and

(ii) aid local Govt in maintenance of law and order in SRINAGAR

Method

5. The following tps are under comd

Tac HQ 1 SIKH One coy 1 SIKH	conc DELHI ex GURGAON night 26/27 Oct

One composite coy RIA SIKH—con DELHI a m 27 OCT.

6 Remd 1 SIKH conc DELHI 27 OCT and together with RIE, cipher and other dets, will be flown on 27 OCT.

Aircraft available 27 OCT.

7

Flight A WILLINGDON	0500 hrs	6 Civil DAKOTAS
Flight B PALAM	0500 hrs	3 RIAF —do—
Flight C PALAM	1100 hrs	8 DAKOTAS
Flight D PALAM	1300 hrs	11 DAKOTAS

8 Capacities—Civil DAKOTAS, 15 men + 500 lbs
RIAF DAKOTAS, 17 men + 500 lbs
"Men" includes personal arms and equipment and bedrolls.

Allotment to flights

9 Air HQ are arranging for one RIAF offr at each PALAM and WILLINGDON airports to contact DEP COMD reps at 261900. Reps will

(a) organise loading sites
(b) reception arrangements for tps
(c) latrines
(d) water points
(e) flood lights

10. Troops will be as little inconvenienced as possible Rep will supervise preparation of loading tables

11. Policy is every flight will be tactically and administratively self contained incl rations and amn Since flights A and B marry up and proceed as one flight, rations and amn may be conc at PALAM

12. Provisional allotment of tps is

Flight A	6 a/c	WILLINGDON	0500 coy 1 SIKH
Flight B	3 a/c	PALAM	0500 tac HQ 1 SIKH
Flight C	8 a/c	PALAM	1100 RIA SIKH
Flight D	11 a/c	PALAM	1300 coy 1 SIKH

This allotment may be altered in acc with the order of arrival in DELHI of tps DEP COMD reps PALAM and WILLINGDON will control.

13 Traffic control GURGAON to PALAM thence in the case of flight A, to WILLINGDON, arranged by DELHI Area

Reps

14. RIE—one offr, two NCO's move flight D.
Task—instruct KASHMIR persl in bdge demolition.
They are not required to take part in demolitions themselves and have no explosive stores.

15 One LO from AHQ(I) (Brig Attal), one LO from State Dept, one IO from DMO and I (AHQ) Three cipher operators and a medical det of 2 and 10 will report DEP COMD rep at PALAM a.m. 27 OCT and be flown out in flight C or D

Action on arrival

16. If wireless comn between you and SRINAGAR civil aviation centre is not established and you are not given the land signal, you will NOT land but go to JAMMU and land there. Similarly if weather conditions at SRINAGAR do not permit of landing there, you will attempt to land JAMMU

17 In the event of landing in JAMMU, you will, through the State Dept LO contact with local State authorities, obtain their appreciation of the situation and the proposals and inform DEP COMD by signal if possible, otherwise by airborne LO, your proposed plan You will

requisition local tpt and send a recce on the route to SRINAGAR as close to SRINAGAR as it can go with sefety and secure the route as far NORTH from JAMMU as possible.

Admin

18 **Amn** (a) One man/gun scale will accompany man/gun.
(b) One add'l complete man/gun scale for all occupants will accompany each plane
(c) Remd bn reserve will be divided between flights
(d) One add'l bn reserve arranged by DEP COMD will be divided between flights.

19 **Medical.** Your RAP will accompany first flight. Medical det will follow in C or D

20 **Casualties.** In SRINAGAR will be evacuated to SRINAGAR Mission Hospital or State Hospital.

21 **Rations.** 6 days 24 hrs rations arranged by DEP COMD will accompany and be divided between a/c

22 DELHI AREA are arranging for tea at WILLINGDON and PALAM 270400 and PALAM 271100 They are also endeavouring arrange a hot meal 271100 You will take XPDR 27 OCT cooked and eat in plane or on arrival SRINAGAR

23 DEP COMD is arranging for rum issue to accompany flight C or D

24 **E.I. Clothing.** If not made available in toto before departure, will follow soonest possible It is hoped to issue two add'l blanket a m 27 OCT.

25 **Tpt and working parties.** For amn, ration and other stores being supplied through DELHI AREA by 3/9 GR

26 **Imprest.** An imprest will be arranged and follow

INTER COMN

27 You will report arrival and completion first task by civil aviation link to WILLINGDON airport DEP COMD sigs will arrange reception messages DELHI

28 You will be under comd DEP COMD You will NOT come under comd KASHMIR State Forces or any Indian Union Army Officer attd to State Forces You will deal direct with the local govt and/or DEP COMD

29 AHQ(I)LO (Brig ATTAL) is accompanying you as an observer

30 Your cipher det has the wherewithal to do all the enciphering and deciphering you need You will be given a directive which will show you to what extent you can send messages in clear.

Sd/-
for BGS
262230

No 20164/G (O)
HQ DEP COMD, 'F' Block,
Secretariat, NEW DELHI

APPENDIX III

LETTER DEMANDING SURRENDER OF SKARDU GARRISON

To

The Officers and Men Kashmir State Forces Skardu Grn.

From·- Col SHAHZADA M MATA-UL-MULK Comd Azad Chitral Forces Skardu (.)

ONE ( ) All attempts to relieve your Grn by Brig FAQIR SINGH Lt Cols KIRPAL SINGH and SAMPURAN BACHAN SINGH have resulted in absolute failure resulting in numerous killed and prisoners taken( ) Azad Forces are now operating in KANGAN SONAMARG and BANDIPUR area also in some case within 15 miles of SRINAGAR( ) TWO( ) You have done your duty as every soldier should do( ) Now that it is clear that no relief can reach you in this mountainous area there is no doubt about the ultimate fate of your garrison and I am quite determined about it ( ) It is no use to carry on a struggle which will result in your total annihilation( ) THREE( ) I therefore advise you to lay down arms and I take full responsibility to give protection to one and all( ) You must believe me and trust me as I am not only a soldier but also possess royal blood( ) I have given instrs to my officers and men that any one approaching with a white flag will not be fired at but taken into safe custody(.) FOUR(.) Lastly as a proof of my goodwill I wish to inform you that not a single Sikh or Hindu resident of CHITRAL has been hurt and not a single non-Muslim property looted or damaged and uptil now they carry on their business as if nothing at all had happened(.) I therefore advise you again to lay down arms and thus save your lives( ) An officer should accompany back the white flag if you consider my words sincere and honest( )

APPENDIX IV

TEN COMMANDMENTS OR RULES FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN TRIBAL WARFARE

1. Remember always the tribesman is a guerilla, and he fights an irregular form of war
2. Until you can outmatch him in all his irregularities of warfare you will not be able really to defeat him.
3 By the use of stratagem, mobility, and guts, you must force the tribesman to play the game of war your way and not his.
4 When you are static and the tribesman is mobile you are in danger of being forced to play the game the tribesman's way.
5 The tribesman never wastes his ammunition, or his wherewithal Make sure you do the same and do not fire except to kill, and with certainty
6 The tribesman will not face the bayonet, use all your cunning and brains to enable you to close with him, and kill him with the bayonet
7 The tribesman does not expect regular troops to make the hours of darkness their friend. Therefore, do so. Patrol actively Armour is the cavalry of today; if it can only be used by day, you are losing your mobility
8 In irregular warfare it is the personal leadership which makes for success The men must have confidence in and be led by their officers. Take Wingate's force in BURMA as an example and consider the offensive spirit the Commander enthused into all his officers, and they in turn into their men They became a determined and ruthless band of brothers, all out to excel in offensiveness and bravery. Make this your object in your unit.
9 In tribal warfare retreat is fatal. If you are stupid enough to lose the initiative and have to fight a defensive action it must literally be fought offensively and to the limit of resources available. Counter attack, even to assault with the bayonet should ever be in mind. Such bold action will usually result in the initiative being regained Nothing encourages the tribesman so much as to see his enemy running away and specially if he discards his arms, or leaves vehicles etc behind
10. The tribesman is not a stayer, he is a peacock, vain and easily discouraged, therefore you need have no fear of him, if you have learnt and are determined to use the previous nine commandments or rules

Distributed to COs in J & K in Feb 1948 by orders of HQ JAK Force.

APPENDIX V

Agreement between military representatives of India and Pakistan regarding the establishment of a cease-fire line in the State of Jammu and Kashmir (S/AC 12/TC.4)*

(Original text English)
29 July 1949

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The military representatives of India and Pakistan met together in Karachi from 18 July to 27 July 1949 under the auspices of the Truce Sub-Committee of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan.

B. The members of the Indian delegation were: Lieutenant General S M Shrinagesh, Major General K S Thimayya, Brigadier S H F J Manekshaw As observers: Mr H M Patel, Mr. V Sahay

C The members of the Pakistan delegation were: Major General W J Cawthorn, Major General Nazir Ahmad, Brigadier M. Sher Khan As observers Mr M Ayub, Mr A A Khan

D The members of the Truce Sub-Committee of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan were. Mr. Hernando Samper (Colombia), Chairman, Mr William L S Williams (United States); Lieutenant General Maurice Delvoie, Military Adviser; Mr. Miguel A. Marin, Legal Adviser.

II. AGREEMENT

A. *Considering:*

1 That the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, in its letter dated 2 July 1949 (annex 25), invited the Governments of India and Pakistan to send fully authorized military representatives to meet jointly in Karachi under the auspices of the Commission's Truce Sub-committee to establish a cease-fire line in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, mutually agreed upon by the Governments of India and Pakistan,

2. That the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan in its letter stated that "The meetings will be for military purposes; political issues will not be considered," and that "They will be conducted without prejudice to negotiations concerning the truce agreement";

3 That in the same letter the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan further stated that. "The cease-fire line is a complement of the suspension of hostilities, which falls within the provisions of Part I of the resolution of 13 August 1948, and can be considered separately from the questions relating to part II of the same resolution";

4. That the Governments of India and Pakistan, in their letters dated 7 July 1949 to the Chairman of the Commission, accepted the

Commission's invitation to the military conference in Karachi,

B *The delegations of India and Pakistan, duly authorized, have reached the following agreement*

1 Under the provisions of Part I of the resolution of 13 August 1948, and as a complement of the suspension of hostilities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir on 1 January 1949, a cease-fire line is established

2 The cease-fire line runs from *Manawar* in the south, north to *Keran* and from *Keran* east to the glacier area, as follows·

(a) The line from *Manawar* to the south bank of the *Jhelum* River at *Urusa* (inclusive to India) is the line now defined by the factual positions about which there is agreement between both parties Where there has hitherto not been agreement, the line shall be as follows

(i) In *Patrana* area. *Kohel* (inclusive to Pakistan) north along the *Khuwala Kas* Nullah up to Point 2276 (inclusive to India), thence to *Kirni* (inclusive to India)

(ii) *Khambha, Pir Satwan,* Point 3150 and Point 3606 are inclusive to India, thence the line runs to the factual position at *Bagla Gala,* thence to the factual position at Point 3300

(iii) In the area south of *Uri* the positions of *Pir Kanthi* and *Ledi Gali* are inclusive to Pakistan

(b)From the north bank of the *Jhelum* River the line runs from a point opposite the village of *Urusa* (NL 972109), thence north following the *Ballaseth Da Nar* Nullah (inclusive to Pakistan), up to NL 973140, thence northeast to *Chhota Qazinag* (Point 10657, inclusive to India), thence to NM 010180, thence to NM 037210, thence to Point 11825 (NM 025354, inclusive to Pakistan), thence to *Tutmari Gali* (to be shared by both sides, posts to be established 500 yards, on either side of the *Gali*), thence to the northwest through the first "R" of *Burji Nar* to north of *Gadori,* thence straight west to just north of Point 9870, thence along the black line north of *Bijidhar* to north of *Batarasi,* thence to just south of *Sudpura,* thence due north to the *Kathaqazinag* Nullah, thence along the Nullah to its junction with the *Grangnar* Nullah, thence along the latter Nullah to *Kajinwala Pathra* (inclusive to India), thence across the *Danna* ridge (following the factual positions) to *Richmar Gali* (inclusive to India), thence north to *Thanda Katha* Nullah, thence north to the *Kishanganga* River. The line then follows the *Kishanganga* River up to a point situated between *Jargi* and *Tarban,* thence (all inclusive to Pakistan) to *Bankoran,* thence northeast to *Khori,* thence to the hill feature 8930 (in Square 9053), thence straight north to Point 10164 (in Square 9057), thence to Point 10323 (in Square 9161), thence northeast straight to *Guthur,* thence to *Bhutpathra,* thence to NL 980707, thence following the *Bugina* Nullah to the junction with the *Kishanganga* River at Point 4739 Thereafter the line follows the *Kishanganga* River to *Keran* and onwards to Point 4996 (NL 975818)

(c) From Point 4996 the line follows (all inclusive to Pakistan) the *Jamgar* Nullah eastward to Point 12124, to *Katware,* to Point 6678, then to the northeast to *Sarian* (Point 11279), to Point 11837, to Point 13090,

to Point 12641, thence east again to Point 11142, thence to *Dhakki*, thence to Point 11415, thence to Point 10301, thence to Point 7507, thence to Point 10685, thence to Point 8388, thence south-east to Point 11812. Thence the line runs (all inclusive to India) to Point 13220, thence across the River to the east to Point 13449 (*Durmat*), thence to Point 14586 (*Anzbari*), thence to Point 13554, thence to Milestone 45 on the *Burzil* Nullah, thence to the east to *Ziankal* (Point 12909), thence to the southeast to Point 11114, thence to Point 12216, thence to Point 12867, thence to the east to Point 11264, thence to *Karo* (Point 14985), thence to Point 14014, thence to Point 12089, thence following the track to Point 12879 From there the line runs to Point 13647 (*Karobal Gali*, to be shared by both sides) The cease-fire line runs thence through *Retagah Chhish* (Point 15316), thence through Point 15889, thence through Point 17392, thence through Point 16458, thence to *Marpo La* (to be shared by both sides), thence through Point 17561, thence through Point 17352, thence through Point 18400, thence through Point 16760, thence to (inclusive to India), *Dalunang*.

(d) From *Dalunang* eastwards the cease-fire line will follow the general line Point 15495, *Ishmam, Manus, Gangam, Gunderman,* Point 13620, *Junkar* (Point 17628), *Marmak, Natsara, Shangruti* (Point 17531), *Chorbat La* (Point 16700), *Chalunka* (on the *Shyok* River), *Khor,* thence north to the glaciers This portion of the cease-fire line shall be demarcated in detail on the basis of the factual position as of 27 July 1949 by the local commanders, assisted by United Nations Military Observers.

C. The cease-fire line described above shall be drawn on a one-inch map (where available) and then be verified mutually on the ground by local commanders on each side with the assistance of the United Nations Military Observers, so as to eliminate any no-man's land In the event that the local commanders are unable to reach agreement, the matter shall be referred to the Commission's Military Adviser, whose decision shall be final. After this verification, the Military Adviser will issue to each High Command a map on which will be marked the definitive cease-fire line

D No troops shall be stationed or operate in the area of the *Burzil* Nullah from south of *Minimarg* to the cease-fire line This area is bounded on the west by the ridge leading northeast from *Dudgaikal* to Point 13071, to Point 9447, to Point 13466, to Point 13463, and on the east by the ridge running from Point 12470, to Point 11608, to Point 13004, to Point 13976, to Point 13450 Pakistan may, however, post troops on the western of the above ridges to cover the approaches to *Kamri Bal* Pass

E. In any dispositions that may be adopted in consequence of the present agreement troops will remain at least 500 yards from the cease-fire line except where the *Kishanganga* River constitutes the line

Points which have been shown as inclusive to one party may be occupied by that party, but the troops of the other party shall remain at a distance of 500 yards

F Both sides shall be free to adjust their defensive positions behind the cease-fire line as determined in paragraphs A through E, inclusive, subject to no wire or mines being used when new bunkers and defences are constructed There shall be no increase of forces or strengthening of defences in areas where no major adjustments are involved by the determination of the cease-fire line

G The action permitted by paragraph F above shall not be accompanied or accomplished by the introduction of additional military potential by either side into the State of Jammu and Kashmir

H. Except as modified by paragraphs A to G, inclusive, above, the military agreements between the two High Commands relating to the cease-fire of 1 January 1949 shall continue to remain operative

I The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan will station Observers where it deems necessary

J The delegations shall refer this agreement to their respective Governments for ratification The documents of ratification shall be deposited with the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan not later than 31 July 1949

K A period of thirty days from the date of ratification shall be allowed to each side to vacate the areas at present occupied by them beyond the cease-fire line as now determined Before the expiration of this thirty-day period there shall be no forward movement into areas to be taken over by either side pursuant to this agreement, except by mutual agreement between local commanders

In faith whereof the undersigned sign this document in three original copies

Done in Karachi on 27 July 1949

For the Government of India

(*Signed*) S M SHRINAGESH

For the Government of Pakistan

(*Signed*) J CAWTHORN
Major General

For the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan

(*Signed*) Hernando SAMPER
M DELVOIE

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* U N Security Council Official Records—4th Year—1949 (Annexure 26—Special Supplement No 7)

APPENDIX VI

J & K OPS, 1947-48

List of Gallantry Award Winners

S.No.	Name and Rank	Unit	Date of Award
PARAM VIR CHAKRA			
1	Rane, 2/Lt Rama Raghoba	Engrs	11 Apr 48
2	Sharma, Maj Somnath (Posth)	4 Kumaon	3 Nov 47
3	Singh, NK Jadunath (Posth)	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
4	Singh, L/Nk Karam, MM	1 Sikh	13 Oct 48
5	Singh, Coy Hav Maj Piru (Posth)	6 Raj Rif	18 Jul 48
MAHA VIR CHAKRA			
1	Atal, Brig Kanhya Lal	77 Para Bde	23 Nov 48
2	Barat, Maj Anil Krishna	AMC	25 Sep 48
3	Brar, Maj Malkit Singh (Posth)	1 (Para) Kumaon	8 Feb 48
4	Butalia, Lt Col I J S (Posth)	4 Dogra	
5	Chand, Maj Hari	2/8 GR	
6	Chand, Maj Khushal	2 Dogra	
7	Chand, Lt Col Thakur Prithi	2 Dogra	27 Aug 48
8	Chopra, Maj Satyapal (Posth)	3 (Para) Maratha LI	15 Mar 48
9	Engineer, Wg Cdr M M, DFC	RIAF	1948
10	Gurung, L/Hav Ram Parshad	1/5 RGR	15 Nov 48
11	Ismail, M (Civilian Labourer)		23 Jun 48
12	Jatar, Capt Arvind Nilkanth	CIH	
13	Khanna, Lt Col Manmohan	4 Kumaon	
14	Khattri, Hav Lal Bahadur	3/9 GR	18 May 48
15	Mistry, Capt Dara Dinshaw (Posth)	1 Med Bty, 40 Med Regt	15 Dec 48
16	Moolgavkar, Wg Cdr H	RIAF	
17	Noronha, Wg Cdr S B	RIAF	1947
18	Pathania, Lt Col Anant Singh, MC	1/5 RGR	15 Nov 48
19	Rai, Lt Col Dewan Ranjit (Posth)	1 Sikh	
20	Raju, Nk	1 Madras	
21	Ram, Hav Chuni (Posth)	2 Raj Rif	
22	Ram, L/Hav Daya	1 Rajput	
23	Ramaswamy, Maj Annavi Krishnaswamy (Posth)	3 (Para) Maratha LI	16 Jan 48
24	Ram Chandar (Civilian Dhoby)	14 Fd Coy Engrs	
25	Rathor, Lt Kishan Singh	1 Rajput	9 Apr 48
26	Rinchan, Jem Chewang	7 J & K Militia	28 Dec 48
27	Singh, Sep Amar	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
28	Singh, Sub Bishan Bahadur, MC (Posth)	1 Sikh	
29	Singh, Nk Chand (Posth)	1 Sikh	
30	Singh, Sep Dewan (Posth)	4 Kumaon	3 Nov 47
31	Singh, Lt Col Dharam	1 (Para) Kumaon	8 Nov 48
32	Singh, Rfn Dhonkal (Posth)	6 Raj Rif	30 Apr 48
33	Singh, Hav Fateh	3 Jat	14 Sep 48
34	Singh, Sub Gurdial	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
35	Singh, Jem Hardev (Posth)	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
36	Singh, Sep Hari	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
37	Singh, Lt Col Kaman	3 R Garh Rif	

38	Singh Jem Lal	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	15 Nov 48
39	Singh Sep Man (Posth)	1 (Para) Kumaon	25 Jan 48
40	Singh, Air Cmde Mehar DSO	RIAF	1947
41	Singh, Jem Nand VC (Posth)	1 Sikh	
42	Singh, Nk Nar (Posth)	4 Kumaon	
43	Singh, Nk Pritam	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
44	Singh, Brig Rajendra (Posth)	J & K State Forces	
45	Singh, Lt Col Rajindar	7 Lt Cav	
46	Singh, Jem Sampooran	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
47	Singh Nk Sishpal (Posth)	2 Jat	
48	Singh, Brig Yadunath	19 Inf Bde	
49	Sonawane, Nk Krishna	1 Mahar (MG)	
50	Thapa, L/Nk Rabilal (Posth)	1/1 GR	
51	Thapa, Lt Col Sher Jung	6 J & K Inf	
52	Usman, Brig M (Posth)	50 Para Bde	
53	Virk, Lt Col Harbans Singh DSO	3 (Para) Maratha LI	

VIR CHAKRA

1	Chand Sub Bhim (Twin award)	2 Dogra	23 Aug 48 27 Dec 48
2	Singh, Jem Har (Twin award)	4 Kumaon	4 Mar 48
3	Singh Jem Kartar (Twin award)	7 Lt Cav	1 Nov 48 2 Dec 48
4	Adisare, Jem Gajanan	3 (Para) Maratha LI	1 Feb 48
5	Agna, L/Hav	1 (Para) Kumaon	8 Nov 48
6	Arunachalam Spr (Posth)	433 Fd Coy Engrs	8 July 48
7	Ayyappan, L/Nk	1 Madras	
8	Bains, Maj Harbhajan Singh	Sig attached to 50 Para Bde	19 Mar 48
9	Bakshi, Maj Zorawar Chand	5 RGR	8 Jul 48
10	Barrette, F/Lt A W (Posth)	RIAF	
11	Barty, Flg Offr D O	RIAF	
12	Bhatia, Wg Cdr K L	RIAF	
13	Bheemiah, Sub Nadikeriandа Nanjapa	638 Coy ASC	21 Nov 47
14	Birbal, Nk Ram	1 Grenadiers	
15	Bisht, L/Hav Amar Singh	3 R Garh Rif	
16	Bisht, L/Hav Jai Singh	3 R Garh Rif	
17	Bisht, Coy Hav Maj Kirpal Singh	3 R Garh Rif	18 May 48
18	Blake F/Lt M P O	RIAF	
19	Blunt F/Lt L R D	RIAF	
20	Bohra, Sub Bhim Singh (Posth)	3/9 GR	29 Aug 48
21	Bolina, Maj H S	4 Kumaon	20 Apr 48
22	Chand, Maj Bhupal Singh	Kumaon Rif	9 Apr 48
23	Chand, Hav Chaniri	Kumaon Rif	14 Mar 48
24	Chand, Nk Dalip	Kumaon Rif	
25	Chand, Nk Kishan	4 Kumaon	
26	Chand Dfr Lall	7 Lt Cav	2 Mar 48
27	Chand, Sub Mani	4 Kumaon	20 Apr 48
28	Chand, Nk Prem	2 Rajput	
29	Chand, Swr Roop	CIH	12 Apr 48
30	Chopra, 2/Lt Jitindar Pal	37 Aslt Fd Coy Engrs	17 Mar 48
31	Chouhan, Lt R L	13 Fd Regt attached to 17 Mtn Bty	20 Apr 48

32	Clarke, Flg Offr G D	RIAF	
33	Dass, Jem Bhagwan	14 J & K Militia	6 Nov 48
34	Dass, Sub Ram Saran	8 J & K Inf	24 Oct 47
35	Datt, L/Hav Naraınder	69 (Bengal Engr Gp) Fd Coy	15 Dec 48
36	David, Sqn Ldr K M	RIAF	
37	David, Lt N G	7 Lt Cav	7 Nov 47
38	Deo, Jem Bas	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
39	Deshmukh, Jem Pandurang, MBE	22 Fd Coy Engrs	3 Jul 48
40	Dhawan, F/Lt Purshotam Lal	RIAF	
41	Dogra, Sqn Ldr B S	RIAF	
42	Dutt, Gp Capt Ranjan	RIAF	
43	Ebrahim, Sub Mohammad	1 Madras	8 Jul 48
44	Gabral, Flg Offr G	RIAF	
45	Gaikwad, Sep Tatyaba	3 (Para) Maratha LI	
46	Gamre, Hav Amrut	1 Mahar (MG)	15 Nov 48
47	Ghadiok, F/Lt T N	RIAF	
48	Ghosh, W/O D	RIAF	
49	Grewal, F/Lt L S	RIAF	
50	Gurung, L/Nk Kalicharan	2/4 GR	
51	Gurung, Lt Kamlal	2/4 GR	30 Jul 48
52	Gurung, Sub San Bahadur	2/8 GR	15 Nov 48
53	Gurung, Rfn Sher Bahadur	1/5 RGR	2 Nov 48
54	Gusain, Sub Gopal Singh	3 R Garh Rif	27 Aug 48
55	Gusain, Maj L S	3 R Garh Rif	10 Apr 48
56	Hegde, Flg Offr V P	RIAF	
57	Isaac, L/Nk Perimbam	1 L of C Postal Unit	16 Dec 48
58	Jhadav, Sep Dhondu	1 Mahar (MG) attached to Kumaon Rif	
59	Joseph, Gnr E	11 Fd Regt	
60	Joshi, Sep/Nursing Sep Jai Dutt	83 Fd Amb	21 Oct 48
61	Joshi, Lt Satish Chandra	CIH	14 Jun 48
62	Kado, Sep Machandar	3 (Para) Maratha LI	
63	Kalan, Maj Inder Singh	2 Jat	20 Dec 47
64	Kalyaniwalla, Sqn Ldr R S	RIAF	
65	Kang, Capt Karam Singh	3 R Garh Rif	18 May 48
66	Kanickasami, Lt R	Engrs attached to 1 (Para) Kumaon	22 Jan 48
67	Karatkude, L/Nk A C A	1 Mahar (MG)	
68	Khattri, Jem Lal Bahadur	3/9 GR	
69	Khattri, Rfn Nanda Bahadur	3/9 GR	
70	Khorana, Jem (SD) Jagannath	601 Coy (Para Support)	3 Jul 48
71	Kokri, Capt Jagir Singh	7 Sikh	26 Apr 48
72	Kotwal, Nk Bhim Singh (Posth)	3 R Garh Rif	
73	Kurian, Maj Kuriyan Pathil	7 Lt Cav	31 May 48
74	Kurup, Hav Gopala	1 Madras	11 Jun 48
75	Lal, Sep Ami	4 Kumaon	
76	Lal, L/Hav Deputy (Posth)	Artillery attached to 2 Raj Rif	15 Jun 48

77	Lal, Sub Jug	1 Grenadiers	1948
78	Lal, Nk Hira	4 Kumaon	
79	Lamba, Maj Karamvir	2 Raj Rif	10 May 48
80	Mahar, Maj Jawahar Singh (Posth)	1 (Para) Kumaon	16 Jun 48
81	Mahar, Sep Pundlik	1 Mahar (MG)	
82	Mall, Nk Bal Bahadur (Posth)	3/9 GR	18 May 48
83	Mall, Sub Shyamu	Kumaon Rif	1 May 48
84	Menon, Flg Offr N B	RIAF	19 Jun 48
85	Mohammad, Zuma (Civilian)		
86	Moitra, Capt Tajendra Kumar	AMC attached to 3 (Para) Maratha LI	15 Mar 48
87	Mukerjee, Maj Kartick Chandra	AMC	1948
88	Murthy, Flg Offr N	RIAF	
89	Nadirshaw, Lt Col Jamshed Dadabhoy	6/8 GR	
90	Nand, Lt Col Hira	1 J & K Inf	1 Jan 48
91	Nand, Sub Parma	11 J & K Militia	19 Oct 48
92	Nath, L/Nk Ram	45/16 Fd Regt	
93	Negi, Rfn Bhopal Singh (Posth)	3 R Garh Rif	
94	Negi, Sub Kishan Singh	3 R Garh Rif	10 Apr 48
95	Nil Kanth, Sep (Posth)	1 J & K Inf	
96	Oberai, Capt Tirath Singh	1 (Para) Punjab	19 May 48
97	Pai, Lt Thervil Parambil Guna Narayana	ASC attached to 50 Para Bde	20 Dec 47
98	Pal, Sep Jai	3 Jat	14 Sep 48
99	Palit, Lt Col Dhantri Kumar	3/9 GR	18 May 48
100	Pandit, Lt Col Suresh Chand	1/4 GR	
101	Pataki, L/Nk Jaman Singh (Posth)	3 R Garh Rif	15 July 48
102	Pharate, Sep Rajaram	3 (Para) Maratha LI	
103	Pillai, Sep Sanal Kumaran	4 Madras	10 Nov 48
104	Powar, Spr Laxman (Posth)	22 Fd Coy Engrs	12 Dec 48
105	Pun, L/Nk Dal Bahadur	1/4 GR	8 Nov 48
106	Pun, Jem Lal Bahadur	1/5 RGR	23 Nov 48
107.	Pun, Sub Ranjit	2/8 GR	31 Dec 48
108	Pun, Sub Rudra Bahadur	2/4 GR	29 Jul 48
109	Pushong, Flg Offr D E	RIAF	
110	Pushpanathan, Coy Hav Maj Murugesa	1 Madras	14 Feb 48
111	Rahman, Nk Abdul	Madras Regt	
112	Raj, Jem Hanas (Posth)	9 J & K Militia	11 Nov 48
113	Ram, Jem Basanta	3 (Para) Rajput	10 May 48
114	Ram, Sep Bhagat	4 Dogra	
115	Ram, Sep Budh (Posth)	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
116	Ram, Sep Chhothe	4 Rajput	
117	Ram, L/Nk Dhani	5 J & K Inf	
118	Ram, L/Nk Dhansi	4 Kumaon	
119	Ram, Sub Gopal	1 Grenadiers	13 Apr 48
120	Ram, Jem Gugan	1 Grenadiers	11 Feb 48
121	Ram, Rfn Hannumana	2 Raj Rif	
122	Ram, L/Nk Hanuman	4 Rajput	

123	Ram, Sep Harnarain	1 Grenadiers	
124	Ram, Sep Jagat (Posth)	5 J & K Inf	
125	Ram, Dfr Jage, IDSM	7 Lt Cav	7 Nov 47
126	Ram, L/Nk Ladhu	1 Grenadiers	
127	Ram, L/Nk Lakhpat (Posth)	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
128	Ram, Nk Lauku	4 Dogra	15 Dec 48
129	Ram, Sep Mange (Posth)	3 Jat	14 Sep 48
130	Ram, Hav Richhpal	2 Raj Rif	10 May 48
131	Ram, Sep Sant	1 J & K Inf	
132	Ram, Jem Sanwal	6 Raj Rif	19 Apr 48
133	Ram, Jem Sardha	1 J & K Inf	17 Jan 48
134	Ram, Nk Sheo Chand	2 Raj Rif	
135	Ram, Nk Shiv	8 J & K Militia	20 Nov 48
136	Ram, Sep Tapeshwar	1 Rajput	
137	Ram, Jem Thambu, MM (Posth)	2 Jat	2 Mar 48
138	Ram, 2/Lt Thandi, MC	3 Jat	
139	Ram, Hav Yad (Posth)	2 Jat	2 Mar 48
140	Rana, Maj Kaptan Singh	2/3 GR	28 Jun 48
141	Rana, L/Nk Lal Bahadur	2/4 GR	
142	Rana, Sub P D	601 Coy ASC	30 Jul 48
143	Rana, Nk Thaman	2/4 GR	
144	Rangaswamy, Capt Venkatapathy	AMC	20 May 48
145	Rawat, Jem Dhyan Singh, IDSM	3 R Garh Rif	17 Jun 48
146	Rawat, Rfn Guman Singh	3 R Garh Rif	
147	Rawat, Rfn Guman Singh	3 R Garh Rif	18 May 48
148	Rawat, Nk Khushal Singh	3 R Garh Rif	
149	Rawat, Maj Kunwar Singh	3 R Garh Rif	15 Jul 48
150	Rawat, Rfn Sangram Singh (Posth)	3 R Garh Rif	15 Jul 48
151	Rawat, L/Nk Thakur Singh (Posth)	3 R Garh Rif	
152	Rewane, Nk Babu (Posth)	5 Maratha LI	6 Dec 48
153	Roy, F/Lt S	RIAF	
154	Sahib, Jem Sheik Khader	1 Madras	9 Jul 48
155	Sallik, Lt N A	4 Kumaon	31 May 48
156	Salwi, Nk Baliram	1 Mahar (MG) attached to Kumaon Rif	
157	Sandhu, Lt Kartar Singh	22 Mtn Regt	
158	Santan, L/Nk	J & K Inf	
159	Sarup, Nk Ram	1 Rajput	
160	Shah, Sqn Ldr Z A	RIAF	
161	Shahane, Maj Shivaji Wasudeo	Artillery attached to 1 AOP Flt	14 Dec 48
162	Sharma, Capt A P	16 Fd Regt	15 May 48
163	Shete, Capt M Y	1 Grenadiers	11 Feb 48
164	Shinde, Nk Shioram	3 (Para) Maratha LI	6 Feb 48
165	Shreedhar, Capt Man Singh	Artillery	
166	Singh, Lt Ajit	6 J & K Inf	30 Mar 48
167	Singh, Jem Ami	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
168	Singh, Sep Babu, MM	1 Sikh	
169	Singh, Sep Bachan	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
170	Singh, Jem Bachittar	4 Dogra	8 Apr 48
171	Singh, Sep Bagh	1 Sikh	

172	Singh, Jem Balwant	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	2 Nov 48
173	Singh, Maj Bhagwan	22 Mtn Regt	1 Feb 48
174	Singh, L/Nk Bhawan (Posth)	4 Kumaon	
175	Singh, Rfn Bhupal	3 R Garh Rif	
176	Singh, Nk Bir (Posth)	2 Dogra	
177	Singh, Maj Brijpal	1 Rajput	6 Feb 48
178	Singh, Sep Buaditta (Posth)	8 J & K Inf	
179	Singh, Nk Budhi	J & K Inf	
180	Singh, L/Nk Chand	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
181	Singh, Nk Chet	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
182	Singh, Nk Chhog	2 Raj Rif	
183	Singh, Hav Chhote	2 Raj Rif	10 May 48
184	Singh, L/Nk Chunni	3 (Para) Rajput	
185	Singh, Sep Dayal	1 Sikh	
186	Singh, Jem Dhan (Posth)	1 (Para) Kumaon	11 Dec 47
187	Singh, Sep Dhan Bahadur	4 Rajput	
188	Singh, Sep Dhanush Dhari (Posth)	Ex 3/1 Punjab attached to 3 (Para) Maratha LI	
189	Singh, L/Nk Dharub	1 J & K Inf	
190	Singh, Sep Gajjan (Posth)	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
191	Singh, L/Nk Gian	11 J & K Militia	25 Nov 48
192	Singh, Sep Gian (Posth)	1 (Para) Punjab	
193	Singh, Lt Col Girdhari, MC	4 Rajput	26 Feb 48
194	Singh, Capt Gopal	4 Mtn Regt	29 Aug 48
195	Singh, Sub Gopal	3 (Para) Rajput	6 Feb 48
196	Singh, L/Nk Gopal	4 Kumaon	
197	Singh, Sep Gurbachan (Posth)	1 Sikh	
198	Singh, Sub Gurcharan, MC	1 Sikh	12 Dec 47
199	Singh, Sub Gurcharan	1 Sikh	23 Nov 47
200	Singh, Nk Gurdial	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
201	Singh, Brig Harbakhsh	163 Bde	1948
202	Singh, Sep Harnam	2/2 Punjab	
203	Singh, Sep Harpal (Posth)	2 Rajput	
204	Singh, Hav Hazari (Posth)	6 Raj Rif	18 Jul 48
205	Singh, Sep Hazura (Posth)	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
206	Singh, Sub Hira	4 Dogra	8 Apr 48
207	Singh, Nk Hoshiar	1 (Para) Kumaon	
208	Singh, Hav Ishwar	7/22 Mtn Regt	18 Mar 48
209	Singh, Sep Jagannath	4 Rajput	
210	Singh, Capt Jagdish	9 J & K Inf	
211	Singh, Jem Janak	CIH	15 Apr 48
212	Singh, L/Nk Janak	9 J & K Inf attached to 1 J & K Inf	
213	Singh, Jem Jeet	1 Kumaon Rif	14 Mar 48
214	Singh, Jem Jit	2 Inf Wksp Coy EME	24 Dec 47
215	Singh, Sep Jodh (Posth)	4 Kumaon	
216	Singh, Maj Joginder	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	18 Mar 48
217	Singh, L/Hav Joginder	1 Sikh	
218	Singh, Sep Kabal (Posth)	1 Sikh	
219	Singh, Sub Kanshi	9 J & K Inf	18 Apr 48

220	Singh, Maj Karam	CIH	9 Apr 48
221.	Singh, Sub Karam	1 (Para) Punjab	29 May 48
222.	Singh, Nk Karam	4 Kumaon	
223.	Singh, Jem Karnail (Posth)	Ex 3/8 Punjab attached to 4 Rajput	5 Feb 48
224	Singh, Capt Kartar	AMC attached to 2/8 GR	2 Dec 48
225	Singh, Maj Kehar, IDSM	1 Sikh	25 May 48
226	Singh, Sub Krishan (Posth)	8 J & K Inf	16 Jul 48
227	Singh, Capt Lachhman	30/11 Fd Regt	16 Mar 48
228	Singh, Jem Madho	1 (Para) Kumaon	21 Nov 47
229	Singh, Sep Maghar	1 Sikh	
230	Singh, Lt Col Mahabir (Posth)	2 Raj Rif	
231	Singh, Hav Mahadeo (Posth)	3 (Para) Rajput	6 Feb 48
232	Singh, L/Hav Mahtab	3 (Para) Rajput	10 May 48
233	Singh, Jem Mall	1 Sikh	12 Dec 47
234	Singh, Rfn Man	1 Kumaon	
235	Singh, Sep Mangal	1 (Para) Kumaon	
236	Singh, Jem Megh	6 Raj Rif	16 Jun 48
237	Singh, Nk Mehar	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
238	Singh, Rfn Mohar (Posth)	2 Raj Rif	
239	Singh, Hav Mokand	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	4 Nov 48
240	Singh, L/Nk Nain	1 (Para) Kumaon	
241	Singh, L/Nk Naurang	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
242	Singh, Nk Parbhati	1 Rajput	
243	Singh, Nk Partap	Kumaon Rif	
244	Singh, L/Nk Phuman	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
245	Singh, Jem Piar	6 J & K Inf	30 Mar 48
246	Singh, Maj Piara, MC	1 Rajput	5 Mar 48
247	Singh, Sub Praween (Posth)	6 J & K Inf	22 Sep 48
248	Singh, Sep Pritam (Posth)	7 Sikh	
249.	Singh, Sub Raghunath (Posth)	1 (Para) Punjab	15 Oct 48
250	Singh, L/Nk Ram	1 Sikh	
251	Singh, Sep Ram	2 Rajput	
252	Singh, Sep Ram Chandar (Posth)	1 Rajput	
253	Singh, Sep Ran	2 Jat	
254	Singh, F/Lt Randhir	RIAF	
255	Singh, Rfn Rewat	6 Raj Rif	18 Jul 48
256	Singh, Capt Risal	J & K Mtn Bty	25 Nov 48
257	Singh, L/Nk Sajjan	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
258	Singh, Maj Sapuran	7 Sikh	14 Oct 48
259	Singh, Capt Sansar	4 Dogra	8 Apr 48
260.	Singh, Sep Sansar (Posth)	1 (Para) Punjab	
261	Singh, Jem Sant	1 Patiala (RS) Inf	23 May 48
262	Singh, L/Hav Sant (Posth)	Ex 3/1 Punjab attached to 3 (Para) Maratha LI	
263	Singh, L/Hav Sardar (Posth)	4 Kumaon	
264	Singh, Maj Sardara	1 Sikh	13 Oct 48
265.	Singh, Sub Sardul (Posth)	2 Rajput	4 Feb 48
266	Singh, Sep Sarup	7 Sikh	22 May 48
267.	Singh, Nk Sarwan (Posth)	1 Sikh	

1 Sikh	
Ex 3/1 Punjab	26 Feb 48
attached to	
3 (Para)	
Maratha LI	
1 Patiala (RS) Inf	10 Dec 47
7 Sikh	24 Aug 48
2/2 Punjab	
1 Sikh	
1 (Para) Kumaon	14 Mar 48
Kumaon Rif	
1 Sikh	
1 Rajput	
3 (Para) Rajput	
2/2 Punjab	
2 Jat	17 Mar 48
attached to	
3 (Para)	
Maratha LI	
1 Patiala (RS) Inf	15 Dec 48
1 Sikh	
1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
4 Dogra	
1 (Para) Kumaon	
1 Sikh	
CIH	
1 (Para) Punjab	
1 Sikh	
1 Patiala (RS) Inf	
RIAF	
RIAF	
3 (Para)	
Maratha LI	
RIAF	
1 Sikh	31 May 48
RIAF	
3 (Para)	
Maratha LI	
13 Fd Coy Engrs	15 Oct 48
1/1 GR	
1/5 RGR	15 Nov 48
2/8 GR	2 Dec 48
2/3 GR	28 Jun 48
2/3 GR	28 Jun 48
2/3 GR	
433 Fd Coy	
Engrs	
RIAF	
2 Dogra	
11 Fd Regt	
1 Madras	11 Jun 48
2 Raj Rif	10 Apr 48
RIAF	
1 (Para) Punjab	7 May 48

32) [illegible] at Sl No 191 in this list another L/Nk [illegible] also got the Vir Chakra award

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